DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 425 131 SP 038 207

TITLE	Bridging Cultures between Home and School. A Handbook with Special Focus on Immigrant Latino Families.
INSTITUTION	California Univ., Los Angeles.; California State Univ., Northridge.; Bridging Cultures Project, CA.; WestEd, San Francisco, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-02-00
NOTE	101p.
CONTRACT	RJ96006901
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Consciousness Raising; *Cultural Awareness; *Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; Hispanic Americans; Individualism; Parent Participation; Parent Teacher Conferences; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Researchers; *Teacher Student Relationship; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS	Collectivism

ABSTRACT

This handbook explores ways that very different value orientations (individualism, associated with the mainstream culture, and collectivism, associated with immigrant Latino cultures) lead to very different expectations of child development and schooling. It also offers many examples of ways to bridge the cultures of home and school through increased understanding, improved communication, and novel educational practices. The examples are drawn from existing research and from new practices created by the seven teacher-collaborators of the Bridging Cultures Project. The seven chapters are as follows: (1) "Introduction to the Handbook," (2) "Diverse Families in the Schools: Earlier Approaches and Background Literature," (3) "The Bridging Cultures Framework," (4) "The Bridging Cultures Project," (5) "From Problem to Solution: The Cross-Cultural Parent-Teacher Conferences," (6) "Learning What Works: Ways to Improve Parent Involvement Across Cultures," and (7) "The Teacher as Ethnographer." (Contains 68 references.) (SM)

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Bridging Cultures Between Home and School

A Handbook with Special Focus on Immigrant Latino Families

February 1998

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BRIDGING CULTURES BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL
A HANDBOOK

With Special Focus on Immigrant Latino Families

individualism **collectivism**

This document is a product of the *Bridging Cultures Project*, a collaboration among WestEd, University of Califorina, Los Angeles (UCLA), California State University, Northridge, and teachers from six schools in Southern California.

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This document is supported by federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, contract number RJ96006901. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.

ABSTRACT

Bridging cultures between home and school is something that many teachers, parents, and students are engaged in daily in many of our nation's schools. Most parents want to support their children's education, and most teachers want to find ways to make schooling more hospitable for students and families outside the "mainstream" culture. In this *Handbook*, we explore the ways in which very different value orientations (individualism, associated with the "mainstream" culture, and collectivism, associated with immigrant Latino cultures) lead to very different expectations of child development and schooling. We also offer many examples of ways to bridge the cultures of home and school through increased understanding, improved communication, and novel educational practices. These examples are drawn from existing research and from new practices created by the seven teacher-collaborators of the *Bridging Cultures* Project.

BRIDGING CULTURES BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

A HANDBOOK

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Acknowledgment:

Special thanks to Alissa Taylor for help with manuscript preparation

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE HANDBOOK

Purpose

The central topic of this *Handbook* is cross-cultural home-school relationships; it is the first of several planned publications arising from the *Bridging Cultures Project*, described in Chapter 4. It is not really a "how-to" guide, although we do offer some specific suggestions for teachers on how to improve home-school relationships with immigrant Latino families. We hope it will stimulate broad thinking about how to meet the challenges of education in a pluralistic society--a society made up of people from many different cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds.

A Truly Useful Theoretical Framework

No prescription can be written for the kind of on-line decision-making teachers must engage in every day, as they seek to support educational equity for every student and as they attempt to understand how the cultures of home and school can best be brought together. However, some frameworks for understanding human behavior (and what underlies that behavior) are generative. That is, from a finite number of principles or observations they can generate many new understandings. We have found this to be the case in working with the framework that underpins *Bridging Cultures*, and we are eager to share what we are learning, so that our fellow educators can test their own experiences against the framework. It is in this context that we discuss not only the "how-tos" but the "whys" of the actions we propose.

Home-school relationships are at the heart of parent and family involvement in schooling, and a large part of successful home-school relationships is successful communication. Of course, in this case, we are talking about *cross-cultural* communication, something whose success depends on extra skill and knowledge.

Communication: The Mediator of Home-School Relationships

We see communication as a mediator between parent involvement activities and home-school relations. As a mediator, culturally sensitive communication shapes parent involvement activities so that they enhance home-school relationships. In this *Handbook,* we consider parent-teacher conferences in some depth as an example of parent-teacher communication, recognizing that such conferences are only one arena for parent and family involvement. Although much of the literature refers to "parent involvement," "family involvement" would be the preferred term. However, we have chosen to use "parent involvement" because of its links to other literature; and it is a term with which teachers are familiar. Figure 1 shows a conceptualization of the relationships among home-school relationships, communication, and the various activities used by schools to involve parents.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The *Bridging Cultures* Project

We want also to introduce readers to *Bridging Cultures* itself, the project that has brought researchers and teachers together in such synergy and that is now producing a range of professional development options.

Bridging Cultures is a collaborative research and development project among educational researchers at WestEd, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), California State University at Northridge, and seven elementary teachers from six public schools in three school districts in Southern California. The purpose of the project is to test the effectiveness of learning about cultural value systems in helping teachers to teach cross-culturally. At this time, the project is supporting teachers to work specifically with immigrant Latino students and their families. A fuller description of the project is found in Chapter 3; the theory and research behind it are the subject of Chapter 4.

The professional development options we are designing are intended for in-service teachers or teachers in training. They are being designed and piloted jointly by the teachers and researchers of *Bridging Cultures*.

Teachers as Researchers

A key feature of the project is the role teachers are playing. The seven participating teachers are themselves acting as researchers in their own classrooms and contributing both to a deeper understanding of the theoretical framework and to the collection of examples of school-based experiences and practices that bring the framework alive. In the *Handbook* we refer to them often as "teacher-collaborators" to distinguish them from the four researchers who are staff (all part-time) on the project.

Practical Ways to Improve Home-School Relationships

Based on the experimentation of the teacher-collaborators in their own classrooms, we discuss, in Chapters 4-6, ways of improving home-school relationships (and thus parent and

family involvement), with specific suggestions for

- enhancing cross-cultural communication,
- organizing parent-teacher conferences that work,
- using strategies that increase parent involvement in schooling,
- using ethnographic techniques to learn about home cultures.

Throughout Chapters 4 and 5, the emphasis is on finding common ground across home and school cultures in order to address joint goals for students. The choice of the bridge metaphor reflects a recognition that both cultures are important: our strategies are meant to assist people in using the bridge to travel back and forth between the two orientations. So, our working model of what makes for student success is a bicultural one.

Finally, while we are careful to point out that the research on which *Bridging Cultures* and the *Handbook* is based has been done with immigrant Latino families, we believe that it can be used as a basis for inquiry about other collectivistic cultures. Teachers will need to conduct their own ethnographic research to find out how their students' cultures approach the roles of parents and teachers, the role of schooling, and expectations about children's behavior (some of the areas of cultural variation explored in the *Handbook*). The teacher as ethnographer is explored in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

EARLIER APPROACHES AND BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Teacher Professional Development around "Culture"

Several strands of theory, research, and practice have contributed in important ways to an understanding of how to make education appropriate for the full range of students in our schools. All of these strands have formed the basis of professional development for teachers.

Making Curriculum More Inclusive

One such strand has dealt with the histories and traditions of ethnolinguistic groups and making changes in curriculum to incorporate aspects of those histories and traditions. Advocating a broader representation of peoples and points of view in our educational programs (and textbooks), some educators have urged development of curricula that are more inclusive (cf., King, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1991). Some curricula (and the professional development related to them) are characterized as "anti-racist" and are directed at raising teachers' and students' awareness of how textbooks and schools' institutional practices promote unconscious racism (Sefa Dei, 1993; Tator & Henry, 1991). A related movement has focused on "prejudice reduction," to help students develop more democratic attitudes and behaviors (Banks, 1995).

Structuring Schools for the Empowerment of all Communities

A second strand has addressed issues of how and to what degree schools and other social institutions serve to promote the empowerment of their constituent communities through their organizational structures and the mechanisms of participation they support (Banks, 1995; Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York, 1966; Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969). Contributing to the empowerment of students from all backgrounds are school-based practices that respond to different needs and family-based expectations, while maintaining high expectations for all students (Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990). These practices include approaches to parent involvement.

Understanding the Influence of Culture on Learning as a Cognitive Process

Another strand has focused on purported cognitive characteristics of members of various groups. For example, some groups have been labeled predominantly "visual" learners (e.g., John, 1972; Kleinfeld, 1970). Or, groups have been variously described as "field-dependent" or "field-independent" (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). Such research often looks at individuals apart from their cultural contexts and is probably better understood when combined with anthropological perspectives. For example, in some cultures children's visual skills become highly honed, because they are expected to learn complex activities (such as navigation or sewing) primarily through observation (Philion & Galloway, 1969; Rohner, 1965).

Understanding the Influence of Culture on Teaching and Learning as Social Processes

A fourth strand has drawn from sociolinguistics and anthropology to examine relationship and communication patterns within certain groups and develop parallel processes based on them in the classroom in order to foster student participation (Au, 1980; Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1981). For example, researchers worked with educators on the Navajo reservation to develop a portfolio assessment process (Koelsch & Trumbull, 1996). In traditional Indian communities, children are typically assessed through observation as they engage in a meaningful activity--not through isolated tasks administered at arbitrary times or through verbal questioning. Portfolio assessment is appealing because it does not require students to be tested out of a meaningful context; rather the products of daily instruction can be evaluated against sets of criteria to determine how well students are doing.

Seeking to expand teachers' understanding of cultural influences on teaching and learning, *Bridging Cultures* is most closely allied with this last strand. However, all of these strands contribute to a full conceptualization of what it takes to educate a diverse population equitably.

Parent Involvement: The Magic Ingredient in Student Success?

The mountain of research showing that parent involvement contributes significantly to student achievement (see, e.g., Chavkin, 1993; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Davies, 1991; Epstein, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey, 1997; National Education Goals Panel, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1994) has resulted in a near-universal mandate across public school districts to find new ways to engage parents in their children's school experience. In fact, eligibility for some types of federal funding is dependent

on districts establishing parent advisory councils and/or engaging in other activities to promote parent and family involvement in schools (see, e.g., Improving America's Schools Act, 1994).

Involving "Minority" Parents

Research on the level of parent involvement in schools suggests that it has increased over the last two decades but that "minority" parents and those from lower socioeconomic groups have had a "lower level of contact with schools than their better-off counterparts" (Moles, 1993, p. 28). However the lack of contact has apparently not been for lack of interest. According to a survey of 2,000 parents conducted by Metropolitan Life in 1987, inner-city parents were less satisfied than suburban parents with the amount of contact they were getting with teachers. They wanted more.

Studies of immigrant Latino families have repeatedly shown high interest on the part of parents in being involved in their children's education (cf., Allexsaht-Snider, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). Other studies including African-American parents (along with parents from other groups) have reported the same finding: high interest without the necessary conditions to support involvement (see, for example, Chavkin & Williams, 1993). *Bridging Cultures* has worked out ways to make Latino parents feel more comfortable with their children's teachers. We have been able to translate interest into involvement.

Looking Beyond Demographics to Interpersonal Processes

If it is true that less-educated and poorer parents tend to be involved less in the activities schools instigate to bring them in, schools still need not be stymied in their efforts to

be more inclusive. Much of the research has focused on so-called "status variables," such as ethnic group membership or socioeconomic status. Other research has shown, however that when schools shift to a focus on "process variables," such as how parents make decisions and choices, they can influence parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). According to some researchers, schools need to understand a) the roles parents are comfortable in assuming, b) the degree to which parents feel competent to take on the tasks the school demands, and c) the effects of the kinds of invitations to participate they send out to the community (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Parents may not only need information about what it takes to help their children succeed, but they may need to feel more welcome in the school (Chavkin & Williams, 1993). In the Metropolitan Life survey, "minority" parents reported that they were intimidated by the staff and institutional structure of the schools and that they felt awkward about approaching teachers (cited in Chavkin, 1989). Cultural differences in what is perceived as welcoming or outright hostile may interfere with school-home communication. This observation rings true to us, based on what we have observed and experienced. For example, even the customary "Please report to the principal's office before visiting your child's classroom" sign may be perceived as unwelcoming or even punitive to a parent unfamiliar with the usual protocol of U.S. schools.

The examples from teacher-collaborators in the *Handbook* will illustrate the importance of dealing with "process variables." Our methods for enhancing the quality and types of involvement of immigrant Latino families are described in Chapters 5 and 6. The principles behind these methods are laid out in Chapter 3. Chapter 7 provides strategies for bridging to still other cultures beyond immigrant Latino families.

Questioning Assumptions

There is little doubt that many schools genuinely want to involve parents more in their children's education. But the assumptions schools make about *how* parents should be involved are rarely questioned, and if "non-mainstream" parents are to be effectively engaged, these assumptions need to be examined. Schools seem to assume that appropriate ways to involve parents in their children's education are to offer advice on parenting, encourage parents to volunteer in classrooms, and give guidance about how parents can help with schoolwork at home. At times, emphasis is placed on recruiting and training of parents to take leadership and even to participate in school governance. (For examples of guidelines to parent involvement, see, e.g., Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, 1994; Epstein, 1993; Moles, 1996; Morris, Taylor, Knight & Wasson, 1995; Oregon State Department of Education, 1990, and the documents of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University).

The School's Role in Guiding Parent Involvement

A primary assumption of the usual approach to parent involvement is that schools need to reach out to parents and guide the involvement. This assumption is based on the belief that schools know what parents need to know--how to help with homework, how to provide a home environment that will support a good student, how to be a parent, and how to take a leadership role--including what aspects of schooling to take leadership around (see documents mentioned in previous paragraph). Actual parent involvement in the school is usually constrained to attending events, volunteering (in prescribed ways), and less frequently--participating in councils or advisory groups that have input into curriculum or school governance.

Parents seem to agree that it *is* the school's responsibility to initiate the interchange (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Chavkin & Williams, 1993). Research with immigrant Latino parents suggests that they appreciate teachers' efforts to involve them in their children's education (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). Yet there is a one-way quality to much of schools' efforts to promote parent involvement that doesn't leave a lot of room for parent input. Of course, home-school two-way communication is desirable in *any* community; however, it may be even more crucial in settings where the culture of school is different from the culture(s) of home. The school cannot afford to assume it understands what parents want for their children or why they make the choices they do.

Understanding Cultural Variables

Cross-cultural research suggests that there is no universally successful way to involve parents (Allexsaht-Snider, 1992; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Gorman & Balter, 1997; Greenfield, Raeff & Quiroz, 1996). Even what is considered "involvement" is culturally variable (Cochran & Dean, 1991, in Allexsaht-Snider, 1992). Parents may believe that the kind of "involvement" taken for granted in U.S. schools will be interpreted as interference or disrespect. Consequently, some parent involvement activities are novel for parents and have to be learned (Simich-Dudgeon, 1993). In particular, the roles that parents or teachers take on differ markedly across cultures (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press); Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). For example, as suggested, the concept of a parent's taking the role of a teacher of academic skills at home may be an alien one (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press).

What Roles Can Parents Be Expected to Take?

Many educators seem to assume that a parent's resistance to taking on the role of academic coach has to do largely with the parent's sense of competence (hence the myriad forms of instruction for parents, ranging from letters to home, to injunctions at parent conference time, to actual courses). However, one reason parents may resist is that they do not believe it is appropriate for them to teach their children in these ways.

Parents may see themselves primarily as "socializing agents" (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press). According to that vision, the role of parents is to "talk with or counsel their children concerning correct and incorrect behavior" (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995, p. 201). The belief is that only by being a good person with proper behavior can one develop cognitively and succeed academically (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995, p. 223). In fact, in Mexican culture, to be well-educated (*bien educado*, in Spanish) is to be well-mannered, kind, and respectful (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). While the saying in the school may be, "The parent is the child's first teacher," the saying at home may be, "The teacher is the child's second mother." In one case, the expectation is that academic instruction (of some sort) should be going on in the home. In the other, the expectation seems to be that the school should be concerned with the upbringing of the child. Both teachers and parents may be disappointed that their underlying expectations are not being met in some way. (This topic is discussed further in Chapter 3.)

The Influence of Parents' Experiences with Schooling

When immigrant parents or those rooted strongly in "non-mainstream" cultures do try to comply with school requests to help their children with homework or engage in tutorial

activities, they will likely use their own school experiences as a basis for understanding what to do--with mixed success (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Teaching methods in their countries of origin may be quite different from those of the school their child attends. As Delgado-Gaitan (1992) points out, if schools are to be successful in getting parents involved in providing certain kinds of home environments for learning, they will need to understand the influences that contribute to the quality of home life and the ways parents participate in their children's education. She notes that these include "the cultural group identity, parents' educational background, their socioeconomic conditions, and the parents' knowledge about the school" (p. 513).

Identifying Appropriate Ways for Parents to Help

Although parents do value academic development, especially literacy development, immigrants from Mexico and Central America may not provide experiences in the home that promote text-based literacy (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). They may read to their children but not ask children to respond to text the way "mainstream" parents do (e.g., answering questions about what happened when, guessing what might happen next, talking about their thoughts about the story). The value of reading to children may be seen as building family unity or mainly as a way to pass on moral lessons. Younger children may not be introduced to print in the same ways as "mainstream" children, who often enter school knowing the alphabet and how to spell their names (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995).

Obtaining Key Information

Because of these possible differences, when teachers and parents are setting out joint goals in a parent-teacher conference, a teacher cannot assume that suggested literacy activities for the home will be carried out in the way expected. Instead, it behooves the teacher to find out what kinds of activities the parent is comfortable with and build on those. The teacher may want to ask the parent to describe what his or her own schooling experiences were like (see Chapter 7 for suggestions on how to do this). And if parents are going to be asked to participate in homework activities, they need to be offered a range of ways to do so (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995).

As suggested, careful attention to the kinds of roles parents want to take on is very important. We know that parents *do* want to support their children's school success, and we need to ask them about how they can do that best. The research on immigrant Latino families suggests that supervising academic homework is not the most likely or productive route for parents to take in support of their children's school success. However, some of the *Bridging Cultures* teachers have found ways to engage immigrant Latino parents in support of academic work (see examples in Chapter 6 of the *Handbook*).

Parents can serve as sources of cultural knowledge about the community, but schools need to provide the mechanisms for them to do so. Schools must recognize that parent involvement activities are not just opportunities for schools to transmit knowledge to parents but for parents to educate teachers and administrators as well (Allexsaht-Snider, 1992). The first step is to assume that useful knowledge resides in the community (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Simich-Dudgeon, 1993). Educators need to become "ethnographers," in effect, eliciting cultural description and interpretation from the parents of

the children they teach, as well as paraprofessional aides and other community members. We will talk about how teachers can develop as ethnographers in Chapter 7 of the *Handbook*.

Finding Common Ground between Home and School

A central purpose of the *Bridging Cultures* project is not only to understand the sources of cross-cultural conflict but to identify ways to resolve or even head off those conflicts. We are all interested in strategies that promote understanding and harmony in the classroom and between home and school, and we are constantly looking for examples to show how common ground can be reached through a range of home-school connections.

Recognizing Continuities

Despite our emphasis on understanding cultural differences, we are confident that common ground can be found. As Goldenberg and Gallimore (1995) say, reflecting on ten years of research with immigrant Latino families, "There are many continuities between the families and schools, often overlooked by teachers and school administrators and sometimes by researchers focused on identifying cultural differences and discontinuities to account for the differential achievement of Latino children with immigrant backgrounds" (p.197). Their comments serve both as a warning and as a beacon of optimism. On the one hand, we should not fall into the trap of using cultural differences as an excuse for low achievement (see also Banks, 1995), and on the other hand, if can use our understanding of cultures to find common ground, there is no reason that students cannot participate fully and successfully in our educational system.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 include many observations and suggestions on how to find common ground or continuities across cultures. They arise from *Bridging Cultures* teacher-collaborators' classroom experiences, from the research of Greenfield and her colleagues, and from the literature on culture and schooling.

Taking a Constructive Stance

Perhaps the first step in the quest for common ground is actually an attitude or a realization. When teachers recognize that their own ways of thinking about child development and schooling are influenced by a particular cultural perspective, they can more easily begin to regard parents as sources of knowledge about a different perspective. A stance that reflects a respect for the "funds of knowledge" that reside in children's communities is critical to the process of cross-cultural understanding (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Seeley, 1993). One of the comments of a Euro-American teacher bears citing. She said, "I have a whole different perspective on culture and how it affects the decisions I made as a teacher. I see that my actions are culturally-bound also."

CHAPTER 3

THE *BRIDGING CULTURES* FRAMEWORK

We are exploring with teachers the ways in which deep value orientations of cultures (including the dominant U.S. culture) motivate different expectations of children and of schooling. These orientations are less visible than the material elements of a culture or the ways a culture celebrates holidays, observes religious beliefs, or creates works of art. They are more difficult to capture than the histories of groups. Yet they undergird whole ways of viewing the world and vast ranges of behaviors, including the ways people communicate, discipline their children, and carry out everyday tasks. Furthermore, if schools are to succeed in promoting meaningful parent involvement, they need to understand how these orientations shape a whole host of beliefs, expectations, and behaviors--on the part of parents on the one hand and of teachers and school personnel on the other.

Individualism and Collectivism

One such powerful value dimension has been characterized as the continuum of "individualism-collectivism." This continuum represents the degree to which a culture emphasizes individual fulfillment and choice versus interdependent relations, social responsibility, and the well-being of the group. While the dominant U.S. culture is extremely individualistic, many immigrant cultures are heavily collectivistic. In fact, about 70% of the world's cultures could be described as collectivistic (Triandis, 1989). At the most basic level,

the difference is one of emphasis on individual success versus relations with others in a group. These two orientations guide rather different developmental scripts for children--and for schooling--and conflicts between them can be seen daily in U.S. classrooms. With greater awareness of how these orientations motivate goals and behaviors, teachers and parents could interpret each other's expectations better and work together more harmoniously on behalf of students.

Documenting Different Orientations

Greenfield and her colleagues began to document how different cultural values might lead to different strategies for dealing with social dilemmas in two empirical studies (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, in press). In the first study, parents, teachers and students from two schools were asked to resolve conflicts presented in home- and school-based scenarios. (The scenario in Figure 2 is one of the scenarios used in this research.) Ways of solving the dilemmas presented in the scenarios

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE.

differed greatly from school to school (See Figures 3 and 4). School #1 represents a primarily Euro-American population; the parents and children represented in Figure 3 were all Euro-American (as were nearly all of the teachers). The dominant response in this school was that the teacher should find a third person to do Salvador's job (Figure 3). In fact, Euro-American parents, their children, and their children's teachers overwhelmingly preferred this solution to the dilemma. Participants who gave this response tended to reason that Emanuel had his own

job to do, and he should not be bothered with another job. This response illustrates the value of not infringing on others' rights. It also reflects the value of protecting the individual's task assignment as well as his individual choice to help. Thus, responses in this category reflect the cultural value of individualism.

INSERT FIGURES 3 and 4 ABOUT HERE

School # 2 serves predominantly immigrant Latino populations. Again, the teachers are primarily Euro-American. Immigrant Latino parents' responses to the scenario, shown in Figure 4, indicated that Emanuel's helping Salvador was the preferred way to solve the dilemma. Nearly 80% of the parents opted for this solution. This response reflects the assumption that human beings are responsible for helping in-group members in order to contribute to the unity and welfare of the group. On the other hand, teachers in School #2 responded in a manner similar to that of teachers in School #1, as did more than 65% of students. However more students than in School #1 (about 35% compared to 20%) recommended that Emanuel help Salvador. In effect, students were split in their decisions about whether to solve the dilemma as their parents did or as their teachers did.

Here we see that a simple dilemma regarding classroom jobs can reveal two different views of human development and social relationships. The harmony among different constituencies (parents, children, teachers) in School #1 is quite evident from a glance at the graph; most parents, teachers, and children had similar responses. In School #2, in contrast, one can see conflicting views among parents, teachers, and children. These very different response patterns cluster around beliefs about how people should relate to their larger social

groups, beliefs that are based on either a more collectivistic or more individualistic orientation.

The Individualism-Collectivism Framework

Table 1 summarizes some of the essential features of individualism and collectivism.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Upon reflection, one can see how these sets of features are interrelated, that is, how they work together as integral parts of one orientation or the other. One of the reasons the *Bridging Cultures* framework is more productive in helping educators think about cultural influences in the classroom than some other research-based perspectives is that it deals with deep and broad values; these values motivate a whole array of ways of thinking and behaving.

Contrasts between Individualism and Collectivism. Children socialized in an individualistic orientation are attuned early on to learning about physical objects and the physical world as a way of facilitating independence (Quiroz & Greenfield, in press; Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998). Parents often encourage children to amuse themselves with toys, so that they will be independent and not require constant adult attention. Learning how to manipulate toys is also the beginning of what might be called "technological intelligence" (Mundy-Castle, 1974). Parents tend to use language as opposed to physical interaction to communicate and control children's behavior. It would not be unusual to see a child playing with her toys in a playpen or crawling around the floor, while Mom or Dad talks to her at a distance. This

approach is in contrast to what happens with children socialized in a collectivistic orientation, where the value of physical objects is primarily that they "mediate social relationships, as gifts do" (Greenfield, Brazelton & Childs, 1989); and holding and touching (rather than language) tend to be the dominant form of communication between parent and child (Greenfield, 1994).

A poignant example of the culturally different ways of regarding objects comes from observations of classroom discussions. In one instance, a kindergarten teacher was showing her class an actual chicken egg that would be hatching soon. She was explaining the physical properties of the egg, and she asked the children to describe eggs by thinking about the times they had cooked and eaten eggs. An immigrant Latina child tried three times to talk about a time when she and her grandmother had cooked eggs together. But the teacher disregarded her comments in favor of a child who explained how eggs look white and yellow when they are cracked (Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996).

In classrooms, we often ask students to discuss objects (and concepts or facts) as things in themselves, apart from any social context or meaning they might have. Such an orientation to objects is unfamiliar to many students, whether they are immigrant Latino, American Indian, Pacific Islander, or from another group that has a collectivistic value system.

The emphasis on the group rather than on the individual extends to notion of property: in collectivistic cultures, the boundaries of property ownership are more permeable. Personal items such as clothing, books, or toys are readily shared and often seen as family property rather than individual property.

Children in collectivistic cultures are less likely to be asked to formulate and share their opinions with others or verbalize about topics that they are learning about. That role is reserved for more knowledgeable people with higher status. Hierarchical relationships and respect for

elders and authority keep people in their appropriate roles--roles that are necessary to the continuity and stability of the cultural community (Kim & Choi, 1994; Suina & Smolkin, 1994; Triandis, 1989). Of course, if children and families are exposed to new expectations in new cultural settings, role relations may change (cf., Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995 regarding sex roles).

Another contrast between the two orientations is that while elders are the source of knowledge and wisdom in collectivistic communities, impersonal texts are the authoritative sources in the individualistic classroom (Greenfield, 1994).

One can see how the more socially-grounded concept of being well-educated (*bien educado)* mentioned in Chapter 2 would grow out of the collectivistic orientation. From such a point of view, cognitive development in itself would not be so important as social development; or at least it would not be seen as a goal in itself apart from development as a good human being.

Implications for Schooling

Perhaps the most obvious differences between the individualistic and the collectivistic orientations seen in the classroom have to do with the relative emphasis on independence, individual achievement, self-expression, and personal choice. The egalitarian, individualistic "mainstream" society encourages children to become independent thinkers and doers who focus on their own achievement and on fulfilling their individual needs. But a child reared in a collectivistic community is socialized to have his or her sense of self based on affiliation with the group (principally the family) and responsibility to the other members of the group, rather

than on personal achievement for his or her own ends. Choices are made with other members of the family in mind.

Different Orientations, Different Outcomes. It does not take much to imagine how these substantially different orientations would prepare children differently for schooling and, in fact, to imagine how parents from these different orientations would have distinct ideas about what a school should be like. The two orientations also typically lead to different instructional organization patterns in the classroom. While collectivistic cultures tend to teach to the whole group or allow students to learn from each other (peer-oriented learning), individualistic ones tend to focus on the individual and emphasize individual responsibility for learning (cf., Stigler & Perry, 1988; Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995).

Individualism and Collectivism in Collision

Dr. Patricia Greenfield and her colleagues at UCLA have shown through their research how these two different value orientations often collide, as children from immigrant Latino families move from home culture into U.S. schools (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Greenfield, Raeff & Quiroz, in press; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, in press). Children of immigrant families may be torn between the values and expectations of their native culture and those of the mainstream. Parents and teachers (the latter representing the mainstream culture) may observe the same behaviors in children but interpret them differently, because they are viewing them through very different culture-based perspectives. For example, when the individualistic teacher says the child is "able to work well independently," the collectivistic parent may hear the teacher as saying the child is "too separated from the group".

Sources of Home-School Conflict

The research on individualism and collectivism (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press; Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, in press; Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996) has led to identification of several areas of potential conflict that teachers may observe in the classroom or in interactions with parents (Quiroz & Greenfield, in press) (see Table 2 for a summary).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The Individual vs. the Group. Conflicts related to protecting the rights of the individual versus those of the group can arise in relation to any aspect of schooling. In a parent conference, the teacher may take the point of view that the child's achieving her potential for the sake of self-fulfillment is a major goal of education (a more individualistic perspective). Parents may be far more concerned with how well their child is integrating into the group or how the child contributes her personal abilities and achievements to the social whole (a collectivistic perspective). Of course, this does not mean parents do not value the child's achievement, but it is seen as serving a different purpose. In the conference, the parents may (unconsciously) try to re-integrate the child into the *family* constellation by bringing up how their other children are doing in school (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press). This is another manifestation of the inclination to consider the child's success in terms of the group rather than as an individual.

Bridging Cultures researchers documented an interesting case of cross-cultural conflict around meeting the needs of the individual vs. meeting the needs of the group. This involved a federally-funded breakfast program in a public school (Greenfield, Raeff & Quiroz, 1996).

According to federal guidelines, only children enrolled in the school are permitted to eat these breakfasts. The problem was that immigrant Latina mothers were coming to school with their children and sharing the breakfasts with the family.

School officials saw this as a problem, not only because of the federal guidelines, but because they interpreted the behavior as "mothers taking food away from their children." So they shut the gates of the school and, with no explanation, stopped allowing parents in at breakfast time. A sign reading, "Only students allowed in the eating area" was posted. From the cultural perspective of the mothers, however, the child whose family comes to school to have breakfast with him or her is demonstrating the value of sharing and contributing to the welfare of the whole family. Bringing the younger siblings to share in the breakfast is the mother's way of fulfilling her responsibility to the family as a whole. In fact, it may be almost inconceivable from such a cultural perspective to think of a family member--particularly a young child--eating without sharing with the rest of the family. Values like these are so deep and unconscious that they go unquestioned, whether from the "mainstream" perspective or from another cultural perspective.

Independence vs. Helpfulness. Teachers, who are generally individualistic (Raeff, Quiroz, & Greenfield, in press), may highly value a child's ability to work independently and to focus on getting his or her own work done. On the other hand, parents from a collectivistic orientation are likely to pay more attention to how helpful and cooperative their child is in the classroom.

Helpfulness is also valued in our "mainstream" classroom culture, but perhaps not when it is seen to interfere with individual achievement. The teacher may be more concerned

with the child's taking responsibility for his or her own work, for cleaning up his or her own materials. The parent may hope to see children helping each other complete tasks and clean up, as in the classroom jobs scenario.

Praise vs. Criticism. Many immigrant Latino parents are not comfortable with hearing extended praise of their children. Praise singles a child out from the group, whereas criticism has a normative effect. It brings the child in line with the group. The teachers of *Bridging Cultures* have noted that the standard wisdom in most "mainstream" American schools is to "sandwich a small amount of criticism in-between a lot of praise." Moles (1996), for example, suggests that during the conference, the teacher "establish rapport with parents, accept parents as advocates, establish priorities, learn from the parents, and *emphasize the positive*. He states that research shows parents are "more willing to listen to a range of feedback about their child if they hear the teacher comment on the child's special qualities first" (p. 22).

But this advice is not universally helpful. For many Latino parents, criticism of their children appears to be easier to hear than praise (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press). One of the project's core researchers, who is herself an immigrant Latina parent, has talked about her own discomfort with being praised in front of other students in her graduate courses. Similarly, when she goes to a parent-teacher conference about her first-grader, she wants to know what her daughter needs to work on. And she is greatly concerned with the child's overall social and moral development, not just academic achievement. In a parent conference, the parent who believes one of his or her most important tasks in child-rearing is to bring the child's behavior into line with expectations will want to hear from the teacher what needs to be done to accomplish that task, too.

Cognitive vs. Social Skills. Latino immigrant parents may be more interested in social behaviors and social skills, while teachers tend to focus on cognitive development of children. As discussed earlier, parents may see cognitive development as dependent on social or moral development. Goldenberg and Gallimore (1995) report on a study they did with immigrant parents from Mexico and Central America in which they sought parents' views about education. They found that many parents did not distinguish between education as *schooling* and education as *upbringing*. The authors say that even when they urged parents to differentiate the two, it was impossible for many. They saw them as inextricably linked. One father expressed a thought echoed by many others, "The two things [formal study and moral rectitude] go hand in hand.... It would be impossible to get to the university if one doesn't have good behavior, if one isn't taught to respect others..." (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995, p. 198).

Given the way in which immigrant Latino parents may conceptualize education, it is not surprising that a dominant (although not always welcome) theme introduced by immigrant Latino parents into in parent-teacher conferences is children's behavior. *Bridging Cultures* teachers note that one of the first questions a parent will ask is, "*Como se porta mi hijo/a?*" (How is my child behaving?). The teacher may try to direct the conversation toward the child's academic achievement, only to be asked again about the child's behavior.

Oral Expression vs. Respect for Authority. Skillful self-expression, critical thinking, ability to engage in discussion and argument--these are all valued attributes of the "ideal student," according to many of the current educational reform efforts. However, parents may be unresponsive to or even negative about teachers' emphasis on oral self-expression. They may believe that a quiet student will learn more and is more respectful than one who speaks up,

singling himself or herself out from the group and taking time away from the teacher's talk. So, when a teacher is talking at length in a parent-teacher conference about what a "critical thinker" a student is and how well he formulates questions, a parent may be alarmed rather than overjoyed.

The issue of authority is not a small one, and it has come up in many settings where "mainstream" Euro-American teachers are teaching "minority" students. Students may mistake a teacher's indirect methods of managing behavior or emphasis on self-control of behavior for weakness on the part of the teacher (whereas the teacher implicitly believes such self-control is necessary for the development of independence and initiative). Parents may have the same response and wonder why the teacher is not simply telling the student in a more authoritative way what to do, what to think, or how to behave.

A related issue is that students who are unaccustomed to being "information-givers" in their home interactions with adults may not be prepared for the rapid-fire question and answer sessions that take place in some classrooms. Teachers may mistakenly assume they do not have the information or understand the questions (Eggen & Kauchak, 1997; Heath, 1983).

Parents' Roles vs. Teachers' Roles. It is a maxim of current educational thought that "Parents are children's first teachers." In many senses this is true, but many parents may not agree with the increasingly academic role they are being asked to take with their children. Teachers often suggest to parents that they work on specific academic skills at home. In many immigrant Latino parents' minds, this is not the role they see as appropriate for themselves (Quiroz & Greenfield, in press). They may believe academic instruction should be restricted to school. However, they *do* want to maintain jurisdiction as socializing agents at home, and they

probably do not want advice on parenting skills--something schools seem to hand out with increasing frequency. It is not surprising that Latino immigrant parents would not want parenting advice from the schools, given that teachers, with their individualistic value system, are working at cross purposes to the socializing influence of the home.

Many immigrant Latinos residing in Los Angeles have immigrated with six or fewer years of education from a country whose educational system is quite different from that of the U.S.. They may not feel qualified to teach academics at home. They may, however, be interested in *learning* academic skills *with* their children (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, unpublished data).

Parents probably have expectations of teachers that teachers may not feel entirely comfortable with. The parallel expression to "Parents are children's first teachers" in Spanish is "*La maestra es la segunda mamá*" (The teacher is the child's second mother.). Parents are likely to expect that the teacher take a stronger role vis-à-vis the development of social and moral skills than the teacher has in mind. They may believe the school is remiss in not addressing this aspect of development adequately.

Personal Property vs. Sharing. In many immigrant Latino families, most possessions are shared. People use things when they need them, and one need not even ask permission to do so. Responsibility for caring for material goods is also shared (see independence vs. helpfulness above). Sharing is the norm; personal property the exception that must be arranged for.

In the typical classroom, even though property (art materials, books, etc.) technically belong to the school, we behave as though children "own" their crayons or their books. If a

child takes a pencil from another's desk, it may even be viewed as "stealing." In a Latino immigrant home this would not be the case. A teacher may feel that a child has problems with respecting personal property, when that child has been socialized to share and expect sharing from others. A parent, told that her child has such a "problem," may be mystified. She may also begin to fear and resent having her values undermined at school.

Another illustration of cross-cultural misunderstandings about property and sharing took place in a multicultural preschool (Quiroz & Greenfield, in press) a little Mexican-American girl was coming into conflict with a little "Anglo" boy. The boy was playing with building blocks on the floor, and she began to play with some of the unused blocks near him. But the boy seemed to feel that because he had taken them off the shelf they were his to play with alone, so he hit the little girl, and she started to cry. The teacher scolded the little girl and told her to find her own materials to play with. She later explained to the girl's mother that her daughter needed to learn to respect the rights of other children. From an individualistic point of view, the boy "owned" the blocks, since he had chosen them first. From a collectivistic point of view, the blocks were to be shared; and an act of aggression made the boy further at fault.

Awareness: A Key to Avoiding Conflict

With any of these areas of potential conflict, the key to problem-solving is awareness. Recognition of the possible barriers to cross-cultural understanding leads to different interpretations of situations, or at least the realization that there is more than one possible interpretation. When teachers and parents are both aware of their somewhat different orientations, they have a greater chance of forging alliances and discovering *shared goals* for children that they can both support. Communication between parents and teachers can become

more comfortable and productive for all concerned. Children, too, can become more conscious of the kinds of choices they are making and learn to talk about different approaches to solving the same problem (and the pros and cons of each).

Making Cultural Assumptions Explicit: An Example from the Pacific

In a related project with which the first author is involved, schools and communities in U.S. entities in Micronesia worked together to fashion mathematics and science standards that would be culturally-compatible. (Pacific Mathematics and Science Leadership Team, 1995) While they subscribed to the view that the best learning is active learning and that students should be encouraged to ask questions and think critically, they wanted to preserve respect for elders and their wisdom. For this reason, they developed specific guidelines about when it is appropriate for children to ask questions and how the questions may be asked, depending on the setting. Elders' wisdom is meant to be listened to and pondered. And the child's ability to understand this wisdom increases over the course of a lifetime, as a result of his or her own experience. Interrogation of an elder is inappropriate. However, in the classroom it *is* appropriate to ask probing questions and to expect a teacher or fellow student to respond (even if only with an additional question). By making the two sets of values explicit, parents and teachers were able to make headway toward resolving a serious conflict.

The Power of the Framework

We believe that a framework characterizing the features of individualism and collectivism is both *economical* and *generative*. It is economical, because it incorporates and explains the relationship among many elements that have previously been regarded as separate,

such as conceptions of schooling and education, attitudes toward family, expectations for role maintenance or flexibility (including sex roles), duties toward elders, authority structures, attitudes toward discipline, ways of dealing with property, and many aspects of communication.

The framework is generative, because it suggests interpretations of and explanations for an endless set of interactions--among students in a classroom, between teacher and student(s), between teacher and parents, between school and community. In this *Handbook*, examples from the teacher-collaborators of the *Bridging Cultures* Project (described in the next chapter) will illustrate how the framework has guided teachers' thinking and action and generated reflection, mindfulness, and deeper understanding of culture-based issues in schooling. In fact, it was the teacher-collaborators who urged development of this *Handbook*. They hoped it would be a resource they and others could use with fellow teachers. Because of the focus of the *Handbook*, the examples will be related primarily to parent-teacher interactions and school-parent communications.

Limitations of a Single Model for Child Development

As Greenfield (1994), has noted, the United States represents a confluence of voluntary immigrants, involuntary immigrants, and conquered indigenous peoples--each with its own cultural history and roots. Groups have different approaches to child rearing, different norms of social behavior and communication, and different approaches to learning. Yet, teachers' understanding about how children develop, learn, and communicate are shaped primarily by a Euro-American model that represents what is normal for only one segment of their students. This is true even for teachers who come from "non-mainstream" backgrounds but who have

been schooled in a Euro-American style educational system (Raeff , Greenfield & Quiroz, in press).

Teachers' expectations can lead students to feel as though they do or do not belong in the classroom--affecting their engagement in learning and, consequently, their achievement. Likewise, parents can come to feel at home or alienated in their children's schools, on the basis of the ways in which the school and its personnel interact with them. If schools are to engender and sustain real parent involvement, they will need frameworks for understanding cultural differences and strategies for actively bridging those differences.

"Ironically, teachers may conscientiously try to create culturally sensitive environments for their students (e.g., through multicultural displays and activities), while simultaneously structuring classroom interaction patterns that violate invisible cultural norms of various non-dominant groups. Teachers may also inadvertently criticize parents for adhering to a different set of ideals about children, families, and parenting" (Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996, p. 40).

The Dynamic Nature of Culture

We must emphasize that there are elements of both individualism and collectivism in any society and that cultures change--particularly when they come in contact with each other. As Goldenberg and Gallimore (1995) observe, "Both continuity and discontinuity across generations are part of the process of cultural evolution, a complex dynamic that contributes to change and variability within cultures" (p. 188). For example, parents' views about appropriate education for girls of the current generation of Mexican-American families were different from *their parents'* views on the same topic (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995).

While these rubrics or categories can be useful in helping us understand tendencies within a group, they should not lead to rigid predictions about specific beliefs of groups or individuals. It is important to recognize that even for immigrant Latino families, values and practices will vary based on the length of time they have been in the United States, the level of education they attained in their countries of origin, and numerous other factors. The varying circumstances of immigrant Latino families lead to different ways of intersecting with the "mainstream" culture, and children's particular experiences in schools and in their communities affect the ways they will adapt to new cultural influences.

CHAPTER 4

THE *BRIDGING CULTURES* PROJECT

Although it was clear to Greenfield and her colleagues that the individualism-collectivism framework was a cogent tool for understanding many cross-cultural interactions in schools, it was *not* clear whether teachers would find it useful for solving problems in their schools and classrooms. So often teachers or teachers-in-training are exposed to interesting theories, but when they try to imagine what those theories mean in terms of what they should actually do in the classroom, they are left hanging. Could teachers benefit from understanding how these different value orientations motivate different expectations of children and of schools? The *Bridging Cultures Project* was founded to address this question.

In-Service Workshops

During the fall of 1996 at a series of half-day in-service meetings, seven teachers from bilingual elementary classrooms learned about the individualism-collectivism framework and research based on it. At the first meeting, teachers responded to a pre-assessment asking them to propose solutions to four problem situations (two at school and two at home), each summarized in a brief "scenario" (the "jobs scenario," shown in Figure 2 and already discussed, is one example). The pre-assessment was designed to reveal the degree to which teachers already had awareness of both ends of the individualism-collectivism dimension. Both their responses to the questionnaire and the discussion that followed indicated that individualistic

assumptions guided their ideal methods of conflict resolution and that they were unaware of an alternative frame of reference. As in the prior research (Raeff, Greenfield & Quiroz, in press), there were no differences between Latina/o and Euro-American teachers on this dimension. Teachers discussed their responses to the scenarios, and the framework of individualism-collectivism was described. Teachers were given blank journals for note-taking and asked to observe in their classrooms and schools for situations that showed how one or the other value orientation was at work. They were also asked to read a chapter on individualism-collectivism (Greenfield, 1994).

At the second meeting, teachers returned to share their observations. They met in small groups to discuss how the framework had helped them see themselves, their students, and their teaching in new ways. This meeting, which went well beyond the time scheduled, was full of animated discussion. The question of whether teachers would find the framework useful was beginning to be answered strongly in the affirmative.

At the third meeting, teachers reported on what they had done in the intervening weeks to apply the *Bridging Cultures* framework in their classrooms and schools. They also completed a post-assessment to be used to compare their initial understanding of the framework with their understanding after some experience in using it to observe their own students and themselves. Teachers were also asked to complete a questionnaire to evaluate the professional development process and the usefulness of what they had learned. They were invited to make suggestions about how to carry the work forward, if they thought it worthwhile.

Initial Project Outcomes

At the conclusion of the third (and supposedly final) workshop, teachers were given the choice of continuing to meet. They were unanimous in their decision to do so. They found that the framework was altering their perceptions of interactions in the classroom and of interactions between parents and school. They wanted to keep talking and thinking as a group, and they agreed to participate in development of materials and presentations based on the project.

Since February, 1997, they have been translating what they have learned into staff development formats for other teachers and administrators. In addition, in collaboration with the researchers, they have begun to seek venues such as conferences and workshops for piloting some of these professional development activities with other teachers and human service workers. In actuality, the teachers are acting as researchers themselves.

In subsequent meetings, teachers have continued their enthusiastic and lengthy discussions about what they are observing and how their new perspective has affected their instruction and interactions with parents and other teachers. They have kept journals to jog their memories for discussion. Several have begun to talk about how they can reach other teachers in their schools, to share what they are learning. The theme of home-school relations, which was magnified as teachers approached a round of parent-teacher conferences and read a paper on cross-cultural parent-teacher conferences (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press), emerged as the focus for this *Handbook*.

Teachers' responses on the pre-assessment and post-assessment were analyzed according to a protocol developed for previous research (Raeff, Greenfield, & Quiroz, in press) (see Table 3). The teachers' responses to scenarios, such as that shown in Figure 2, changed

dramatically from more individualistic to more collectivistic (Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, Quiroz, & Greenfield, 1997). The outcome for the teachers was a more balanced orientation.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Even more revealing than the data from the two assessments, were the teachers' comments about how they were being affected by participation in the project. A sampling of these is included here.

Comments of *Bridging Cultures* Teachers

"I am much more aware of how strongly the collectivist model is ingrained in my Latino students and how strongly the individualistic model is ingrained in our curriculum, teaching methods, and society."

"It [the framework] has given me a greater understanding of why my kids tend to work together automatically."

"Every day I will be much more understanding and tolerant of my students' need to help each other and their families."

"I have a whole different perspective on culture and how it affects the decisions I made as a teacher. I see that my actions are culturally-bound also."

"As an immigrant from Mexico, myself, I can see how I have had to fight my own collectivistic upbringing to be successful in U.S. schools. Those of us who jumped from one orientation to another made the leap without even knowing it! Now we need to tap our own cultural knowledge for the sake of our students."

CHAPTER 5

FROM PROBLEM TO SOLUTION: THE CROSS-CULTURAL PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE

We have reviewed the individualism-collectivism framework and research based on it. We have also given our readers some sense of the *Bridging Cultures* Project and how the professional development workshops and the overall participation in the project affected the teacher-collaborators. In this chapter of the *Handbook*, we will explore how cross-cultural understanding can lead to more successful parent involvement in children's schooling. We use the topic of "parent-teacher conferences" as an opportunity to discuss cross-cultural communication, recognizing that the implications of what has been learned stretch well beyond the venue of the parent-teacher conference.

Parent-teacher conferences are just one of the strategies that schools use to get parents involved in their children's schooling process. We have chosen to give considerable emphasis to the parent-teacher conference for several reasons. First, the parent-teacher conference is almost a "mini-laboratory" for examining how different values can lead to different understandings of children's development (and different goals for schooling) and result in problems in parent-teacher communication. Second, we have first-hand data on cross-cultural parent-teacher conferences (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press), along with a simple method for analyzing parent-teacher communication that can be used by others to monitor the success of the conference. Finally, *Bridging Cultures* teachers have urged that we address this topic,

because of their own concerns and frustrations as well as the recognition that other teachers--particularly new teachers--can benefit from what they have learned.

The *Bridging Cultures* teachers' perspective has shifted from one of regarding parent-teacher conferences principally as an opportunity to educate parents to viewing them as an opportunity for mutual sharing. Of course, the teachers *always* saw the conference as a two-way learning opportunity, but they have a new sense of what that means. In the past, they may have asked parents about important events going on in the family (the birth of a baby, absence or illness of a parent, and the like); but now they have more insight into parents' points of view about child development and education. One teacher said the framework changed "my view and understanding of the parents' actions and views."

The Tradition of Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are a staple in the repertoire of public school practices. A recent study of 810 elementary schools in the United States (Carey & Farris, 1996) showed that 92% scheduled school-wide parent-teacher conferences, and it is likely that most of the remaining schools had some provision for parent-teacher conferences scheduled at the discretion of teachers. Schools in the study reported that parents were more likely to attend a parent conference than any other school-wide event open to parents. Of course, parents and teachers (and sometimes students) do have other opportunities to meet and discuss mutual concerns and interests at activities such as back-to-school nights, open houses, special assemblies, and even sports events. However, the parent-teacher conference is usually the one formal occasion when parents and teacher meet alone, face-to-face for a designated amount of time to focus on

a single student. (Although this is not the only possible--or always the most successful--format, as we shall see.)

Parent-teacher conferences are widely accepted as an opportunity for parents and teachers to share their perceptions about a student's school performance and come to some understanding of what the student's needs are. Conferences are frequently used to explain report card grades and are typically scheduled in conjunction with the completion of a grading period. The conference is often used to "emphasize the parents' role in the education of the child and ways the teacher can assist them" (Moles, 1996, p.22) and to provide resources and materials the parents can use at home.

Is There a Shared View of the Child?

Teacher: Carolina has really done well this marking period. She's at the top of the class in math, and her writing is coming along great.

Parent: My son... Jorge... he is good in math, too...

Teacher: Well, that's great! (*voice rising*) But I want to focus on Carolina's progress right now.

Parent: Silent, looking down at his lap.

(Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press)

What is going on here? Parent and teacher seem to have failed to connect. There is an expectation that, through the parent-teacher conference, teacher and parent(s) will come to a shared view of the child. But research on cross-cultural parent conferences suggests that this shared view is often elusive, at best (Allexsaht-Snider, 1992; Greenfield, Quiroz & Raeff, in

press). At worst, teacher and parent part, each believing that the other does not value what is most important for the child. In the snippet of conversation above (similar to what was recorded in an actual conference), it is apparent that something is going wrong in the communication between parent and teacher. In order to understand the likely problem, we need to know more about the culture-based expectations of parent and teacher. Greenfield, Quiroz & Raeff (in press) have characterized the cross-cultural challenge clearly:

> Adults in a culture symbolically construct an ideal child. This ideal child conforms to the culture's goals for child development. However, the nature of this ideal child varies from culture to culture (Harkness & Super, 1996). Ethnic diversity therefore implies varying definitions of the ideal child. Many American schools are currently populated by children coming from immigrant families. Insofar as home culture differs from school culture, it is possible that parents and teachers may construct different images of the ideal child (p.1).

Before exploring how and why things may go wrong in a conference and suggesting strategies to make cross-cultural conferences more successful, we need to survey the larger context of which parent-teacher conferences are a part.

Putting the Parent-Teacher Conference in Proper Perspective

It is not realistic to expect the parent-teacher conference to serve more than a fraction of the need to communicate between home and school. It should be just a small component of parent-teacher relations. *Bridging Cultures* teachers emphasize that teachers should not wait until conference time to begin establishing good communication and sharing information about report cards, school policies, and the like--along with eliciting information and perspectives from parents (see also Chrispeels, 1988; Chavkin, 1989). As Chavkin (1989) notes, "There is

groundwork to be laid long before the first conference and follow-up to be done after the meeting" (p.122). Successful communication must be nurtured through a whole variety of formal and informal interactions.

Culture and Communication in the Parent-Teacher Conference

The results of Greenfield's initial research led Greenfield and her associates to investigate how the values of collectivism and individualism might be evidenced in actual parent-teacher conferences. As we have suggested, the parent-teacher conference provides an interactive situation where basic cultural values may be displayed. Because parents and teacher are focused on a child's development and school progress, the conference is likely to highlight differences in values and beliefs surrounding the goals of child development.

Sources of Miscommunication

Parents' expectations of their children and of the school guide how they interpret what the teacher says and vice versa. When there is "miscommunication," it is often not the words that are said that cause the problem but the (usually unconscious) expectations underlying the words that present stumbling blocks. When parents and teachers share common values, they are likely to hold shared assumptions about the goals of child development. This underlying agreement leads to harmony in what has been called the "social construction of the child." When the participants do not share the same values, there is a real risk of misunderstanding in the parent-teacher conference. It is important to realize that when parent and teacher cannot come to common understanding, the outcome is not *neutral*--simply a failure to communicate.

In fact, parents and teachers alike have lamented that it is a highly *negative* experience for both (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press).

Research on Cross-Cultural Parent Teacher Conferences

Greenfield, Quiroz and Raeff (in press) videotaped nine parent-teacher conferences between immigrant parents from Mexico and El Salvador and their children's Euro-American teacher. The classroom was a combination third and fourth grade. The conferences were "naturally-occurring," that is they were not specially scheduled for the study. As might be expected, these parent-teacher conferences showed instances of both harmonious and discordant communication. However, there was considerably more discord than harmony in the social construction of children by teacher and parents. Analysis of the communication patterns of the nine conferences revealed that, *far* more often than not, parent and teacher disagreed on goals for children. Teacher-initiated topics that caused problems were thinking skills, oral language skills, teaching at home, individual accomplishment, and advice on parenting skills. These topics and responses to them parallel several of the conflicts discussed earlier in "Sources of Home-School Conflict" in Chapter 3: Individual vs. Group Accomplishment, Praise vs. Criticism, Cognitive vs. Social Skills, Parents' Role vs. Teachers' Role.

We alluded to one example of a failure to communicate earlier. When the teacher says the child expresses opinions well in classroom discussions, the parent may hear her as saying the child talks too much or does not show enough respect for the teacher or others. A common misunderstanding on the part of teachers occurs when parents seem to pay more attention to a child's social behavior than his or her academic achievement (see Cognitive vs. Social in Chapter 3). In this case, teachers may assume that parents do not value achievement or even

education. However, we know from considerable research that immigrant Latino parents have a deep and abiding belief that formal education is the most important means for their children to achieve social and economic mobility (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995).

Missed Opportunities

Parent-teacher conferences are a real opportunity for teachers and parents to learn from each other. Yet, for many reasons, they often turn out to be more of a *missed* opportunity. Teachers may feel pressured to cover too many issues in a conference, and even when they have smaller classes, it seems there is never enough time. When teacher and parent come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the conference may be complicated by problems in communication-- even when a translator is present. But, as we have suggested, the problems often are actually "below" the conversational level, in the kinds of assumptions each person is making about what the most important topics of the conference ought to be--in particular about what aspects of the child's learning or behavior to focus on.

Diagnosing and Repairing Communication Problems in the Conference

It is not unusual for an immigrant Latino parent and a teacher to complain about a lack of communication with each other, but often neither understands what is really causing the problem. A knowledgeable teacher can help shape communication that works for everyone's needs--the teacher's, parent's, and ultimately the child's. In addition to recognizing the areas of possible conflict that may come up, a teacher can go beyond conversational content and look at the interactional processes between herself and parents. The teacher can monitor the success of the conversation by considering the following questions:

- Does the parent ratify (validate) a topic you have brought up by verbal or non-verbal means? (See Table 4 for an example.)
- Does the parent elaborate on the same topic you have introduced (verbally)? (See Table 4 for an example.)
- Does the parent confirm a comment or observation you have made (verbally or non-verbally)? (See Table 4 for an example.)

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Ratification, elaboration, and confirmation are all signs that the parent is in agreement with the teacher about the importance of what he or she is saying and that the parent agrees with the teacher's interpretation of the facts. Such conversation could be characterized as "cooperative." Parent and teacher are on the same wavelength. Of course, we must remember that communication is a *reciprocal* process. That is to say, both teacher and parent should be introducing topics and responding to the other's comments. The process should be "socially symmetrical" (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press, p. 13). Consequently, a teacher might want to reverse the roles in the questions above and ask:

- Do I ratify (validate) a topic the parent has brought up by verbal or non-verbal means?
- Do I elaborate on the same topic the parent has introduced (verbally)?
- Do I confirm a comment or observation the parent has made (verbally or non-verbally)?

However, given a parent's likely perception of his or her role, he or she may not feel comfortable initiating a topic.

Instances of Conversational Harmony. In examples A and B in Table 4, teacher and parent seem to be in agreement that reading orally and silently are important activities for the child. They may not have the same reasons for believing so (cf., Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995), but there is no conversational discord at this point. In example C (taken from the same parent-teacher conference), we see apparent agreement on a child development goal: the improvement of the child's handwriting. Note how harmonious the conversation is when the teacher makes a criticism about the child's handwriting and says it could be neater.

In another cooperative interchange during a parent-teacher conference documented by Greenfield, Quiroz, and Raeff (in press), the teacher asked about the child's reading at home and discovered that the child was in the habit of reading to a sibling. Here was something the teacher could wholeheartedly endorse (focus on individual skills) and that parents were pleased with (helpfulness). In this case, an activity that is valued at home as a service also serves the school purpose of developing a skill.

Instances of Discord. On the other hand, if a parent does not acknowledge what the teacher has said, becomes silent, or actually changes the topic, he or she probably either does not agree with the teacher or does not think the teacher's topic is all that important. Such conversation could be characterized as "uncooperative." Something is clearly going awry. In the examples labeled "D" and "E" in Table 4, one can see a striking failure in communication. The father does not pick up on the teacher's desire to talk about the child's academic success, nor does the teacher respond to the father's desire to discuss the academic merits of the whole family (Greenfield , Quiroz, & Raeff, in press). As Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff (in press, p. 17) observe:

> The father is not comfortable with the teacher recognizing his daughter as outstanding, as she does in Turn 1; this recognition may threaten the collectivistic goal of integrating each child as an equal contributing part of the family group. Hence when the teacher symbolically constructs his daughter as an outstanding individual learner, the father implicitly reconstructs her as a normative part of the family group by equating her academic skills to those of her younger brother....

In another parent-teacher conference videotaped by Greenfield, Quiroz, and Raeff, an example of cross-cultural conflict in the construction of the child occurs around the issue of verbal expression (see "Oral Expression vs. Respect for Authority," Chapter 3). The teacher has been talking about how well the child has been using language to express herself and ask questions. When she asks the father toward the end of the conference whether he has any questions, he asks, "How is she doing? She don't talk too much?" (Greenfield, Quiroz & Raeff, in press, p. 18). In encouraging the child to talk more in class, the teacher is promoting behavior that is positively valued in school but negatively valued in the child's home community (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press): "This creates a conflict for both parent and child, and this type of conflict has the potential to alienate children from their parents (or from the school). Similarly, it could alienate parents from their children or from their children's school" (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press, p. 19).

Successful Monitoring. When the parent ratifies what the teacher is saying, elaborates on the teacher's comments or confirms them, the communication is going well. Likewise, the teacher should note whether she is responding to parents' topics adequately. If a parent does not respond, either verbally or non-verbally, the teacher needs to pause mentally to consider what might be going on. At such a point, a question to the parent about his or her point of view

or concerns might allow the parent to re-enter the conversation. In any case, it is not worthwhile for the teacher to pursue the topic she has initiated when the parent has become disconnected from the dialogue. It is important for the teacher to keep in mind that the goal is to find common ground, not to reform parents' notions of education or child-rearing.

Other Cultural Contexts. Although the conversational examples we have used here pertain to immigrant Latino parents and Euro-American teachers, the strategies for monitoring a conversation can be used with other cultural combinations. Of course, to understand why conversational problems occur, it is necessary to know something about the backgrounds of both parents and teachers. (Clues as to how to obtain such knowledge are found in Chapter 7, "Teacher as Ethnographer".) There is no sure-fire formula for successful communication, and it is impossible to anticipate every conversational twist and turn. However, if the teacher is able to recognize conversational breakdown, he or she can take steps to investigate why it may be occurring and remedy it.

Using Cultural Knowledge to Enhance Communication

The suggestions that follow were made by a cultural informant who is a member of our research group. As an immigrant Latina parent and educator, she is able to reflect on her own first-hand experience through the lens of individualism and collectivism. Here, in the paragraphs that follow, she draws upon her cultural knowledge as well as her observations of the kinds of cultural translations that teachers' assistants provide during parent-teacher conferences. She talks about how to create a comfortable conversational tone and genuine

connection to parents through the use of indirect questions, recognition of parents' values, and genuine empathy based on understanding.

In Chapter 7, we will discuss how a teacher who does *not* come from the same culture as a particular child or family can become an *ethnographer*--one who learns directly from her students and parents about their cultures. Teacher aides, or paraprofessionals, are also an important source of cultural knowledge. In many schools, they are the only adults who understand the culture and speak the languages of students from groups that have recently emigrated. Even when the language of students is widely spoken, a paraprofessional who comes from the particular background of students and their families can bring critical cultural understanding into the realm of school, if he or she is shown the appropriate interest and respect.

Fostering a Comfortable and Respectful Conversational Tone

There are steps teachers can take to make the conversational tone of parent-teacher communication sensitive to parents with collectivistic backgrounds. In general, conversation should be kept as informal as possible. A certain amount of social "small talk" is expected. Especially when a parent is much older than the teacher, the teacher needs to remember to use the pronoun "*usted*" (the formal form of "you") and not "*tu*" (the informal form) when addressing him or her. This practice will maintain the appropriate conversational status between teacher and parent. The use of "*usted*" conveys respect, but it also maintains a certain social distance. Although the relationship between teacher and parent may become cordial and in some ways personal, it is probably inadvisable to lapse into using "*tu*."

Using Indirect Questions

Teachers may need to use several prompts to get the information they need, and a less direct approach to information-gathering is likely to be more successful. *Bridging Cultures* teachers, like many others, use parent-teacher conferences to establish joint goals with parents for children. However, for Latino parents of collectivistic orientations, discussing their children's goals is a very sensitive and intimate matter. A question-and-answer format may give an undesired impression of coldness, as though teacher and parent are putting together an impersonal business plan for the child.

Rather than ask if the student has a designated time and space for doing homework, the teacher may make an observation such as, "Sometimes parents say it is hard to seat their children at a specific place to do homework or study, because some of us live in small places and have other people around us all the time." If parents are faced with a similar problem, they may be relieved to hear that it has been voiced by someone else and less embarrassed to talk about it. The experiences of other parents (rather than direct prescriptions by the teacher) can be used as a source of suggestions for solutions to problems. This approach gives the teacher the chance to acknowledge other parents' problem-solving strategies and help parents without embarrassing them. Conversation of this nature reflects the kind of respect one would expect to be shown between teachers and parents in a collectivistic culture. It can begin to foster in the parent a feeling of acceptance and increased comfort with the teacher and the school.

Recognizing Collectivistic Values

Because modesty is valued by many immigrant Latino families, teachers may want to talk about student achievements in the context of the classroom group and emphasize how such

achievements are socially valued. (See the earlier discussion of Praise vs. Criticism in Chapter 3.) For example, if a child is particularly good at critical thinking, explaining how that ability contributes to the class performance, or even to the community, is probably more pleasing to the parents than hearing how much the child has excelled in comparison to other children.

In forming relationships with students' families, it is appropriate for a teacher to explain the standard expectations of the school (e.g., as measured through report cards and grades) as separate and sometimes distinct from the shared goals that teacher and parents may hold for a child. This is not to suggest that compliance with the school's goals, which may seem to the parent to focus excessively on individual achievement, is not important.

Communicating a Message of Caring

Subtle cues can help to transmit a message of caring and appreciation for another culture's valuing of family ("familism"). When talking about a child with the child's parents, a teacher can create a bond of trust through the use of the right pronoun. A teacher may not realize that for some parents the use of the exclusive pronouns "I" and "you" conveys a sense of separation between teacher and parents. In talking about the child, it is appropriate to use "we," to communicate that teacher and family are a team--especially when talking about a child's problems or goals. In such a case, teacher and parents both have knowledge about common goals and problems and need to work as a team to address them.

Using the pronoun "we" makes it clear to the parents that the teacher has something in common with them and that they all share responsibility for ensuring the child's successful performance in school. This stance is compatible with the collectivistic orientation toward children as part of a greater unit, the group.

Cultivating Empathy

We do not mean to suggest that teachers should memorize a set of rules for conversing with immigrant Latino parents. Rather, we want to encourage teachers to learn enough about a collectivistic orientation to acquire a sense of how a parent from such a background might think and feel and come to understand the expectations such a parent might have of the teacher and the school. Understanding the potential differences between a collectivistic culture and the culture of the "mainstream" can foster empathy--something that is far more helpful than prescriptions about question-asking or pronoun usage.

Knowledge of how individualism and collectivism operate also helps teachers to adapt their interaction style to parents' styles. For example, Latino parents with more years of formal schooling may be more comfortable with a conference that focuses on academic achievement. The key is to open the door to understanding differences and to shape conferences accordingly. One conference style does not fit all.

Improving Parent-Teacher Conferences

Bridging Cultures teachers, like other teachers, struggle with the logistics of parent-teacher conferences. These conferences are usually too short; 15-20 minutes per child is often all that is allocated within the school schedule, and what can be covered is severely limited. It could be argued that when the conference is used to forge cross-cultural understanding--when parents and teachers do not start off with the same assumptions about schooling and learning--even more time than usual is required. *Bridging Cultures* teachers have been experimenting with strategies for getting more time with parents. Some have extended the number of days

they will stay after school for conferences, so that they can get at least half an hour with each set of parents.

Teachers have suggested that conferences could be "tiered" so that Kindergarten and first grade are at the same time, second and third, and so on. This might obviate the difficulties parents encounter when they have several children in a school and find themselves running from classroom to classroom or choosing which classroom to visit.

Group Conferences

Two *Bridging Cultures* teachers have found small-group conferences to be very successful with immigrant Latino parents. One, a kindergarten teacher, has brought parents together on the basis of their children's ability groups. Grouping in this way resulted in considerable verbal interaction among parents. In each group, at least one parent was willing to talk, and that seemed to make other parents comfortable to participate as well. An upper elementary teacher did group conferences for the first time this fall. Her account appears in the accompanying box.

Groups Work Better for Parents and Teacher

I scheduled three group conferences on the "Pupil Free Day," two Spanish-speaking groups and one English-speaking group. I arranged the Spanish language groups when my paraprofessional aide could attend and assist in translation. For parents who were not able to attend during the day, I scheduled a separate time.

The parents sat in a circle with me and the children (including many siblings of the children in the class). The children presented their parents (mostly mothers) with a folder that contained test scores, report card, a parent tips list, and a booklet designed to help parents interpret test scores. I explained a simple way of understanding how the children's test results showed which academic areas were strong and which needed improvement. I discussed the report card and talked about how parents could help students at home. Students then escorted their parents and siblings to their desks to share and discuss their work portfolios. They also took their parents on a tour of the room to show their displayed work. This worked pretty smoothly, because I had helped the students prepare the previous week by role-playing the parts that would be taken by student and parent.

Parents seemed very pleased with the new approach to conferencing. A friendly, comfortable, and warm feeling came across during the conferencing. Many parents had questions that benefited the other parents. Parents' conferencing together lent a source of mutual support, like family members all supporting each other. This familial atmosphere aligns with a collectivistic model.

I found the group conferencing to be relaxing for the parents. It was a less threatening environment than the individual conferencing style with support and company lent by the other parents. This format elicited a group voice from the parents rather than an individual voice. It also represented a shift in the balance of power. My paraprofessional assisted in the translation of my commentary and the parents' questions and responses.

I was able to meet with 22 out of 28 parents in the group format. For those who attended the group conferences, I also provided an opportunity during the hour following each conference for parents to ask private questions or set up a time for an individual conference. The remaining six parents were seen within the three-day conference period at another time.

The new group format organized by the teacher appears to be well-liked, efficient, and culturally-concordant. As a result, the school's principal has asked the teacher to lead a school-wide staff-development session on her approach.

As teachers observe, immigrant Latino parents may feel more comfortable speaking in a group; one's ideas may stimulate another to say something. The kindergarten teacher remarked that with group conferences the interaction is much more "give and take" and that she finds she does much less talking. Teachers get less burned out explaining the same thing over and over and can be more genuinely "present" to the experience. Perhaps most important, parents gain a sense of empowerment from the opportunity to participate as part a of a group.

CHAPTER 6

LEARNING WHAT WORKS: WAYS TO INCREASE PARENT INVOLVEMENT ACROSS CULTURES

In the course of the *Bridging Cultures* workshop experience, teachers' own orientations shifted strongly from pure individualism in the direction of collectivism, leaving them with a greater balance between the two value orientations. Moreover, their reflections showed that they do not regard one orientation as superior to the other. In line with this new balance in their value systems, they found that adding elements of the collectivistic orientation created more harmony in their classrooms of immigrant Latino children.

In this chapter we present examples of the changes teachers have made that relate to parent-teacher relationships. All of the educational practices we discuss involve a compromise between individualism and collectivism; they are not purely collectivistic. Schooling is, by its very nature, individualistic, and the strategies teachers are developing involve introducing a collectivistic element into existing practices. As we noted at the beginning of the *Handbook*, the choice of the bridge metaphor (and we acknowledge that it risks being overused!) reflects a recognition that both cultures are important. The strategies of the teacher-collaborators discussed in the following pages are intended to help students (and, at times, teachers and parents) cross the bridge between the two orientations. As we have said, our working model of what makes for student success is a *bicultural* one. Students should not have to sacrifice their home-culture identities and their relationships with their families in order to succeed in school.

Most exciting has been the nature of the dynamic change process. New understandings of the inner culture, the value assumptions that many immigrant Latino families bring to school, have led to spontaneous changes in teachers' feelings and practices. Many changes have met with extremely positive reactions. Most astonishing is how much easier these changes have made teaching and home-school relations. This outcome creates more energy for further cross-cultural adaptations.

In the rest of the chapter, we offer several in-depth examples of strategies *Bridging Cultures* teachers have developed to a) make classrooms and schools more welcome places for families, b) promote bicultural proficiency, and c) extend opportunities for parent-teacher interaction so that genuine home-school relationships can be built. We present some first-person accounts from the teacher-collaborators about how they have altered their practices around parent involvement and the changes they have seen as a result. Examples center around home-school communication, parent volunteers, and cooperating with parents to solve problems.

Impromptu Family Visits to the Classroom

Bridging Cultures teachers have consciously become more flexible in their interactions with parents. One teacher explained that it used to seem inconsiderate when parents brought younger siblings to a conference or when family members showed up at a classroom event (a holiday party, e.g.) uninvited. With a new slant on these behaviors (recognizing the group orientation of her students' families), she has gotten more relaxed about including additional family members unexpectedly. She no longer sees their appearance as intrusive but as a natural, family-oriented behavior on their part. Now she finds herself being invited to family

gatherings, and she attends whenever she can. She feels closer to her students and their families and is learning a lot about their lives.

Promoting Bicultural Proficiency

Another teacher has reflected on her own efforts to bridge cultures of home and school with her students. She feels a responsibility to help her students negotiate the individualistic school system, so she tries to explain to parents and students why some emphasis on individual achievement is necessary. Alternatively, she also designs "Family Homework," that may require students to read to younger siblings, measure ingredients as they cook with their parents, or do some other activity in concert with other family members. Recognizing that parents emigrated to the United States in order to better their lives, she tries to help students acquire the skills they will need to do so.

In this teacher's classroom, students work in cooperative learning groups and are encouraged to help each other on many occasions. She notes that when she holds parent-teacher conferences she sometimes has a tendency to focus on the report card more than she would like, because she is not fully fluent in Spanish, and the report card is easily translated. However, she also relies on the assistance of a classroom aide fluent in Spanish who cannot only translate what she and parents say but "translate the culture." For her, reflection about the needs of her students in view of the demands of their new culture and expectations of their old cultures is a continuous process.

Understanding Parents' Points of View

In another example from our teacher-collaborators, a case of potential cultural conflict arose when a teacher was planning a camping trip that would take students away from home for two nights.

The Camping Trip

For the second year the fifth grade classes are taking a camping trip away from the school site for five days and four nights. Although I teach primarily fourth-grade, I also teach social studies to fifth-graders; and this year it was my job to send a letter home to parents of these students to get permission for them to go on the trip.

While the African-American and immigrant European parents quickly signed their children up, I found that I had to talk with some immigrant Latino parents individually to get them to respond. In the process of these telephone calls, I discovered that there were two major issues. *First*, parents were not comfortable with having their children away from them overnight--for the first time especially--without the ability to make contact with them (something that was prohibited). A few requested that we take a cell phone along, but most school staff feel that part of the value of the trip is for students to be in a natural setting without benefit of modern technology.

Second, some parents said that they would have to discuss as a family whether the child could go and how to apportion his or her responsibilities to other members of the family while he or she was gone. Here was a real example of the collectivistic values of helping and safeguarding the needs of the group over those of the individual. In this case, the potential conflict was resolved through extended discussion with parents and allowing enough time for families to work through a decision-making process that made sense to them.

Do Schools Send the Messages They Intend?

The *Bridging Cultures* teachers have bemoaned the fact that while parents exhibit a great desire to be in the schools when their children are in beginning grades, their interest

seems to abate dramatically by the end of elementary school. À propos of this situation, one of the *Bridging Cultures* teachers wrote the following:

> ***Unconsciously Discouraging Parent Involvement***
>
> Our kindergarten classes are inundated with parents before, during, and after school. There is so much involvement that I have heard on a few occasions, "I would like to get rid of some of these parents." In these cases, teachers are making the judgment that they do not want this kind of involvement. By the time the child ends up in the fifth grade, we almost literally have to drag parents to get them into our classrooms.
>
> What is happening between K and fifth grade? What are the messages parents are receiving in regards to being welcomed at school that filter most of them out?

As the school breakfast program problem discussed in Chapter 3 illustrates, schools need to examine the messages they are communicating to families. In order to do so, they need to hear from parents and students how those messages are being interpreted, i.e., what they actually *mean* to those receiving them. Likewise, the ways schools approach parents for their participation and the types of participation they offer must have tremendous impact on parents' inclination to participate.

Being More Conscious of the Messages That Are Sent

A *Bridging Cultures* teacher-collaborator has reported that in conjunction with the establishment of a federal breakfast program in *her* school, the school was instructed to post signs saying, "Only students allowed in the eating area." Fortunately, she was able to alert her colleagues about the potential for misunderstanding in the community. At that point, disaster was averted: the bilingual coordinator intervened by writing a letter to parents explaining the district policy and assuring the parents that the decision was meant to protect the children. The

coordinator also expressed the school's desire to involve them in other areas and asked for their support. She saw to it that new, friendlier signs with children's drawings on them were made and posted.

Developing Closer Personal Relationships with Families

Bridging Cultures teachers have noticed that they are more comfortable approaching parents and responding to parents as a result of their involvement with the project. They gather strength from each other to take risks, and the more they discuss aloud with other professionals the rationale for their practices, the more they realize they can trust their instincts.

The first-grade teacher who found herself participating in more family events with her students saw improvements not just in relationships but in students' achievement last year. She believes that the two outcomes are closely related. Here is her account:

A Team Emerges

Last year, with the class size reduction,* I had the opportunity to engage with the parents of my students more easily. I also began a reading program that required parents to participate with their children. At the same time, the *Bridging Cultures* group started. Although I had a basic connection with the culture of my students in that I majored in Spanish, and I too come from a family of immigrants, it was the *Bridging Cultures* focus that made me aware of where and how I was holding back and holding on to my views, even without wanting to. It was this awareness and willingness to open to another view that made last year my most successful school year academically and interpersonally (parent involvement-wise).

Last year I feel the parents, students, and I were a real team. The reading program required that the parent read with the child each night and return a slip noting how much time they read. There was 100% participation. Not only that, but the test scores from our May testing were excellent. My students, tested in Spanish, as a class scored way above average on overall reading. Their mathematics scores were equally high. The two English speaking first-grade classes' group scores on comparable subtests were significantly below average, markedly lower than those of my English language learners.

*In California, additional funds were allocated by the Legislature in the 1996-97 school year to reduce primary classrooms in size.

Extending Opportunities for Parent-Teacher Interaction

Monthly Meetings

Conferences or other forms of parent-teacher get-togethers can be scheduled throughout the year--not just at conference time. One *Bridging Cultures* teacher (who teaches fourth grade in partnership with another teacher) holds parent-teacher meetings about once a month "so as to keep the parents as team members and more a part of their child's development at school." She says that this process allows her to understand parents' needs and to explain hers so that they can come together in "cooperative action." A description of her efforts to build bridges to parents follows below.

First Wednesdays

My team partner and I have been holding monthly parent meetings since July, 1997. The meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month, right after school and then again at 5:30. The contents covered in these meetings vary from general announcements to going over the material in that month's unit of study.

As my school is on a year-round schedule, we found that the meeting held right before Winter vacation was particularly helpful, because it allowed us to explain the homework package to parents. In that way, we could involve them in the child's work over the two-month break. It also allowed us to get a better handle on the parents' sense of being able to help their children. We found ourselves with some parents who needed further explanation on the package. A group of mothers came back the next morning asking about specific work. This made my partner and me very happy, because we could see that they had reviewed the work the night before and felt comfortable enough to discuss their needs with us.

Now, these meetings didn't start out with 100% participation. In fact, out of our 38 students, only 6 to 7 parents attended the first two meetings. The numbers have slowly improved, and most of the parents usually stay after the meetings to talk about their children or simply to chat. We've gotten to feel comfortable and supportive of each other. My Open House and parent-teacher conferences are attended by *all* of the parents. I think this has a great deal to do with the monthly meetings. While I've always wanted to hold these meetings, I don't think I'd have seen the full value in them had it not been for the *Bridging Cultures* project.

Seeking Constant Interaction

This same teacher cultivates any opportunity for parent-teacher interaction, because of the value she sees in it. In the segment below, she talks about how even the most brief and informal interactions contribute to better home-school relations.

Seizing the Moment

One of our school rules directs the teachers to accompany their students to the exit gate and to remain there until the parents arrive or until the gate is closed. I take this opportunity to have mini-conferences with the parents. These conversations may never even deal with the child. They may touch on the weather or any other social topic (it may even be just a simple greeting). Yet, I find that these interactions foster a closer bond with the parents.

I also encourage home visits. I find them to be very positive, and the mothers are always pleased that the teacher cares enough to make the social call for the child.

Encouraging Parent Volunteers

Volunteering in the classroom is one of the forms of parent involvement sought by most schools. But an often unspoken deterrent to a volunteer program that brings many parents into the classroom is teachers' fears that parents will not understand their instructional strategies and may be critical of them. Teachers may also worry that they do not have the time or skills to educate parents about how to participate in helpful ways.

One of the *Bridging Cultures* teachers, who teaches a mixed-age lower elementary class with Kindergarten, first and second graders (K-1-2), decided to use what she was learning through the project to increase participation in her parent volunteer program. She talks about the transformation in her parent volunteer program this year:

From One Volunteer to Twelve

Actually, at the beginning, I had only one parent who was volunteering on a regular basis in my classroom. Because I have a multi-age classroom, I have seven families this year who were with me last year, and I thought some of those parents might feel comfortable in the classroom. Incidentally, because of the multi-age arrangement, there are some siblings placed together in the classroom. This situation allows for siblings to help each other and, on occasion, to play together-- a valued opportunity from a collectivistic perspective.

In the past I would have felt intimidated to have a parent in my class while I was teaching. I thought the whole burden of teaching was mine. I would stay long hours after school doing what I needed to do to get my kids ahead. But my needs, combined with new understandings, led to new steps this year.

At our *Bridging Cultures* meetings we discussed how valuable education in reality is to immigrant Latino parents and how they want to continue having a role in their children's lives, including while they are at school. Keeping this in mind, and seeing the need I had, I proceeded to meet with my parents and asked them at what times they could come and what days as well. However, it took a lot more than just asking parents to give me a schedule to get them involved.

Both the parents and I had difficulty approaching each other for help. Most parents had little formal education and probably did not know how they could actually assist in the classroom; only a few had attended junior high or high school. I had to conduct my own informal ethnographic research about my families and began to build relationships with parents in the process.

Through simple conversations I had with some of them after school, I became aware of how much formal schooling they had. This gave me a good idea as to who could help my students to practice reading skills and who would rather assist putting materials together in the classroom or at home. As I became more familiar with my parents, I built a bridge between school culture, their culture, as well as my own. I started getting a better response regarding my call for volunteers.

In September, one parent (a high school graduate) was volunteering to help students during independent reading time. Soon other parents, who had accompanied their children to school, were staying on long after attendance had been taken. Sometimes they'd spend some time talking about commonalities in their homes, but I soon noticed they were talking about educational concerns. All the first-grade parents wanted their children to be reading by

From One Volunteer to Twelve (continued)

December. They saw how motivated the students were to read if someone read one-on-one with them even for just ten minutes. I was very excited at this point.

Although I was now averaging five parent volunteers a week, I still felt like there was something missing. Many parents would stay but were uncomfortable to interrupt me while I was teaching a lesson and ask what they could do. They would sometimes see work they could do quickly, and then they would just sit and wait until reading time came. During my conferencing in November, I showed my parents a folder I compiled. In this folder I included a paragraph about how much I needed them to help their children achieve different academic goals. I developed a specific schedule including days and times. I told them they were very welcome to bring younger siblings and emphasized how being in the classroom may help them (the younger siblings) when they were actually in school later on.

I typed a page addressed to each individual parent in which I explained whom they could work with and what skills to focus on. I also included a page with other activities that weren't necessarily academic that they could all help me with. I wrote a note in the folder that there was a lot of work parents could do at home for the classroom if they couldn't come during school hours because of work or any other reason. The folder was in a very visible place titled "Volunteers," so that a parent who didn't or couldn't commit herself originally would feel welcome to pick up the folder any time she could make it.

After much thought and reflection on the ideas discussed at *Bridging Cultures* meetings, some inquiry, and simple conversation with my parents, we were able to develop a system that would allow them to play an important part in their children's education and also help me out with some of my duties. I am so happy to say that I went from one parent volunteer to twelve (out of the seventeen families in my room).

From this example, it is evident that promoting the involvement of immigrant Latino parents in the classroom is a) possible and b) something that requires both effort and knowledge about parents' lives. While this very moving example is about increasing parent involvement in a volunteer capacity, the strategy that was used to achieve this goal was ethnography, a technique from anthropology that is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE TEACHER AS ETHNOGRAPHER

In order to form a bridge between the culture of the school and the culture of families, especially immigrant families, the teacher must become an *ethnographer*--a participant-observer with the children, but especially with the parents. She must find out background information that allows her to make parents feel comfortable in the school environment and enables her to understand what kind of role in their children's education the parents will be able to take. One of the most relevant areas of inquiry is the parents' own educational background, including both level and location (country), as the following example shows.

Using an Ethnographic Approach to Solve Classroom Problems

During the 1996-97 school year, the *Bridging Cultures* teacher who teaches the K-1-2 classroom had a first-grade student who simply wouldn't speak in class. Here is her description of what happened:

Mother and Teacher Come Together

I had had this boy since Kindergarten, and he had never spoken in class. As concerns mounted, the principal and others began to suggest he might belong in a special education class. I really believed the child had normal ability, and I decided I would have to work closely with the child's parents, if the problem were to be solved.

I talked with the mother, asking her about her own educational background and trying to feel out what might be an appropriate way for her to be involved in solving the problem. I discovered that she was literate, having moved to the United States after elementary school and finished high school and some college here. She was able to read to the child and help him with literacy skills. It was very frustrating at first, but she persisted. For my part, I treated him just like the other children. Finally, he gradually started speaking in class. After a while I could see that his math skills were really coming along, and then he started reading well.

At the end of the year, this boy scored in the 96th percentile on the standardized math test and in the 85th percentile in reading (both in Spanish). I know that if I had not had the support of the mother and we had not both held out the expectation that this child would achieve, we might have been meeting at the end of the year to discuss alternatives that neither of us would have felt good about.

Another teacher-collaborator (who teaches Kindergarten) relates an experience she had. Her suggestion for solving the problem was based on gaining knowledge of the neighborhood conditions and of the parents' situation at home. At a more basic level, this knowledge was accompanied by an ability to identify with parents, which led to an unexpected and positive outcome.

The Attendance Problem

I was sitting in a faculty meeting with a large group of teachers one afternoon, and the topic of attendance came up. We have a chronic problem keeping our attendance rates up, and teachers were discussing whether there was anything that could really be done about it. The tone was fairly negative. Finally, I said that I thought a lot of the problem had to do with the fact that the parents often had no support at home, no one who could stay with a younger child who was sick, for example. It isn't safe for children to walk to school alone in our neighborhood, so parents' only recourse under those circumstances is to keep the child at home.

It occurred to me that parents could some how "buddy up" and help each other get children to school when there was an emergency. Families with children live near each other, but I was hesitant to take a prescriptive approach or hand out names and addresses to the whole group without parents' involvement and agreement. What I began to do was approach parents in ones and twos and ask them how they thought we could solve the problem, and they themselves suggested they could find parents near them so that they could help each other. Some of them started walking together to see where each other live.

Now, I often actually see a parent walking two children to or from school. There have been many occasions when a child has been able to come to school because of this informal, parent-organized system when he or she would otherwise undoubtedly been left at home.

This may be a small example of change, but I have noticed that I am taking a new tone toward parents. When you say, "We've got a problem. We need help," versus "You need to do this" (whatever it is), they will absolutely help. In our group conferences, we talked about how we have to help each other. I will ask them with regard to a problem, "What do *you* think?" It seems to make all the difference in the world.

Practical Tips

Posing Diplomatic Questions

Because teachers, unlike anthropologists, may not have an opportunity to observe in their children's homes, much has to be learned through conversation with parents; often this will take place in parent-teacher conferences. In order to learn through conversation, diplomatic questions must be constructed. Diplomatic questions do not appear offensively personal, because they are based on background knowledge rather than ignorance; the teacher can use this knowledge to make her information-seeking more indirect. (This point was elaborated upon in Chapter 5.)

For example, if a teacher wants to ask an immigrant mother how far she went in school, she can first ask two non-threatening questions: "Where are you from?" and "How old were you when you came to the United States?" As an example, the mother may answer that she is from Mexico and that she was educated there. The teacher can now use her knowledge of Mexican society to transform what could be a threatening probe into a welcoming one: "I know that many places in Mexico do not have schools available or they exist only to sixth grade. It must have been difficult to get an education in Mexico." It is important to notice that this probe is *not* in the form of a question. That and the fact that it shows relevant background knowledge, rather than ignorance, makes it a socially competent conversational move, not an intrusive probe. Because it is both *indirect* and *knowledge-based*, it should meet with a positive response and successfully elicit a story about school, e.g., "Yes, I had only one year of school. The school was too far from our *ranchito* (little farm)." This is the kind of questioning discussed

earlier in the section, "Culture and Communication in the Parent-Teacher Conference," Chapter 5.

Interpreting Information

What can a teacher do with this information? Well, now she knows that this mother would not feel capable of teaching her child at home. More likely, as suggested earlier, she would be interested in *learning with* her child. In a study of parent-teacher conferences (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, unpublished data, 1995), one conference involved an immigrant mother who had a first-grade education. The teacher talks with her about *teaching* her child at home; she replies that she loves to learn *with* her child. The teacher does not appear to notice this transformation by the mother and does not seem aware of the mother's educational level. Miscommunication has occurred. Had the teacher known to find out about the mother's educational level, it would not have happened. Indeed, she could have encouraged the mother to learn *with* her child. For immigrant mothers with little education, this process could be an educationally valuable alternative to the more standard "mother as teacher" for both mother and child.

Another thing a teacher can do is ask parents to give *their* interpretation of a child's behavior in a situation where the child has had a problem. The situation of the little girl and the blocks in Chapter 3 would have been a perfect opportunity for the teacher to hear another interpretation of what was going on.

Had the teacher asked the mother for an interpretation of the same scenario, she might have learned something important about a different perspective. The norm in the home may well have been to share all the toys whenever another child was around. This is not to say that

the rules of the classroom must be equivalent to those of home; rather, the rules in both settings can be made explicit so that children understand what is expected of them.

An incident such as the one described can be grist for the mill in the parent conference, if enough trust has been built to allow parent and teacher to listen to each other in good faith.

Preparing for Ethnographic Inquiry

The ethnographic process requires background knowledge. A teacher cannot expect to know how to frame questions that will elicit useful answers without having done some homework in advance. Of course, the more the teacher can learn the better; however it is often the case that some basic understanding can go a long way toward starting a productive conversation. The next section provides relevant background knowledge for two of the largest immigrant populations in Los Angeles, Mexican and Korean. Even through these brief descriptions, one can see how crucial background knowledge is to understanding students and their families--and how very different the backgrounds of immigrants can be.

Ethnography of Mexican Immigrants

The overwhelming majority of Mexican immigrants come from the lowest ranks of Mexican society. They are often from poor, rural backgrounds. They must make the transition from country to city, as well as the transition from Mexico to the United States.

Schooling in Mexico

The most important background information on Mexican immigrants relates to the sociology of schooling in Mexico. The vast majority of poor people have only elementary

schooling available to them. After that level, schooling becomes expensive and is not available in every community. Even elementary schooling is not geographically accessible to people who live on farms out in the country. High school not only costs money but is available only to an elite who can pass an entrance examination. In our sample of poor immigrant Latinos in West Los Angeles, a typical educational pattern was a mother with some elementary school education and a father who had attended junior high (Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press).

Disparities in Values and Experiences

Often a major reason for familial immigration is to provide more education for children than would be available in Mexico. However, such families have relatively collectivistic ideals and do not have the more individualistic value system that higher levels of schooling promote. Nor do they have as much experience with formal education as their children's teachers. On the one hand, their collectivistic value system leads such parents to socialize their children for "good behavior" more than for cognitive skills. On the other hand, the teacher's greater level of formal education leads these parents to respect her authority as teacher and leave all cognitive teaching up to her (Greenfield, Raeff & Quiroz,1996). Bridging this disparity in values and experiences has been the major focus of this *Handbook.*

The Issue of Indigenous Languages

In the present wave of Mexican immigration are many people from self-identified indigenous "Native American" communities. Sometimes they come to the U.S. speaking an Indian language, without knowing either Spanish or English. An example of a large indigenous community from Mexico in the Los Angeles area, is that of the Zapotec Indians in Venice,

California. Thus, school personnel need to be aware of the possibility of indigenous "Latino" students who do not speak Spanish. An important educational question is whether such children should start out in Spanish-speaking classrooms or go straight to English. This issue is complicated by the fact that Indians have, since the Spanish conquest, suffered oppression and discrimination at the hands of other Mexicans.

Extending Ethnographic Inquiry to Other Groups

Although our *Handbook* follows our experience in taking examples from immigrant Latino families, we hope the *Handbook* provides a model for bridging cultures with other immigrant groups. This final chapter on the teacher as ethnographer presents methods by which a teacher can, with the help of parents and children, herself generate the kind of information for other groups that we have presented for immigrant families from Mexico and Central America.

Ethnography of Korean Immigrants

To give teachers the background knowledge they would need to carry out ethnographic inquiry with another important immigrant group in Los Angeles, Koreans, we thought it would be useful to provide a brief ethnography of recent Korean immigrants. In addition, the contrast in the historical situation of these two groups can help us recognize how valuable specific ethnographic information can be to educators.

Downward Mobility. This group (the Korean immigrant population) has come to the United States with the highest level of formal education of any immigrant group in U.S. history. Most Korean immigrant parents have at least a college education. Because of not

speaking English well, many of these immigrant parents are downwardly mobile when they arrive in the United States. Nonetheless, with the help of extended family and community, they usually have enough capital to start small businesses like mom-and-pop grocery stores.

Seeking Equitable Educational Opportunities. In general, Koreans emigrate to the United States in order to ensure a high-quality education to their children. They come from a country that values formal education very highly, but where the highest quality education is the result of an extremely selective and stiff examination process. This process eliminates most young people. Parents want the more democratic and open educational system available in the United States. At the same time, their educational background and motivation enables Korean parents to provide strong academic stimulation to their children at home.

Conclusion

The Challenge of Coming Together

Finding common ground among parents, students, teachers, and the school as a cultural institution is quite obviously a task that reaches well beyond individual teachers. The best hope for children is for parents to work together with school staffs to establish academic and social goals, learning about each other's (culture-based) values and expectations in the process. If this is to happen, the entire school system, including the administrative staff, must be dedicated to such mutual learning. As educational reformer James Comer has said, parent involvement programs "work best when they are based on child development concerns and when they are implemented within a broader context of improved relationships among the significant adults in the lives of children" (Comer & Haynes, 1991, p. 277).

Of course it takes effort to build strong relationships between school and home under any circumstances. Schooling holds high stakes for all students, and parents and professional educators--even those from the same cultural background--do not always agree on the goals of schooling or on how they can best be reached. When major cultural differences are layered on top of the usual challenges, there is increased risk of a conflict in goals and methods. After all, as we know, culture exerts a powerful influence on how people think about education, learning, knowledge, and schooling.

The Need for Cultural Knowledge

Comer's vision of improved relationships among all the significant adults in a child's life would seem to rest on mutual respect and understanding. But such requirements are jeopardized because of the relative lack of exposure of teachers to models for understanding

how culture and schooling come together and research based on them. It is undoubtedly true that schools will need to take the lead in nurturing stronger relationships with families, but they will have greater success if they approach the task with some grasp of the ways culture shapes views of child development and schooling. At the very outset, they will need to make their own cultural perspectives visible--something that is often more easily done by contrasting them to another perspective via a set of characteristics (such as those of individualism/collectivism).

Reason for Optimism

The *Bridging Cultures* Project is exploring how a cultural framework can affect teachers' thinking and, consequently, classroom practice. Some of the most striking outcomes of the project have to do with 1) the perspective teachers have gained on their own culture (and that of schools), 2) the degree to which this has begun to influence their thinking and their practice, and 3) the increased confidence teachers have in their own abilities to build the kinds of relationships with families that will support student success in school. They know how to learn from their students' families, and they have new ways of understanding what parents are sharing with them. What they have learned will stand them in good stead whenever they encounter students from unknown cultures, even though the specific issues will be different.

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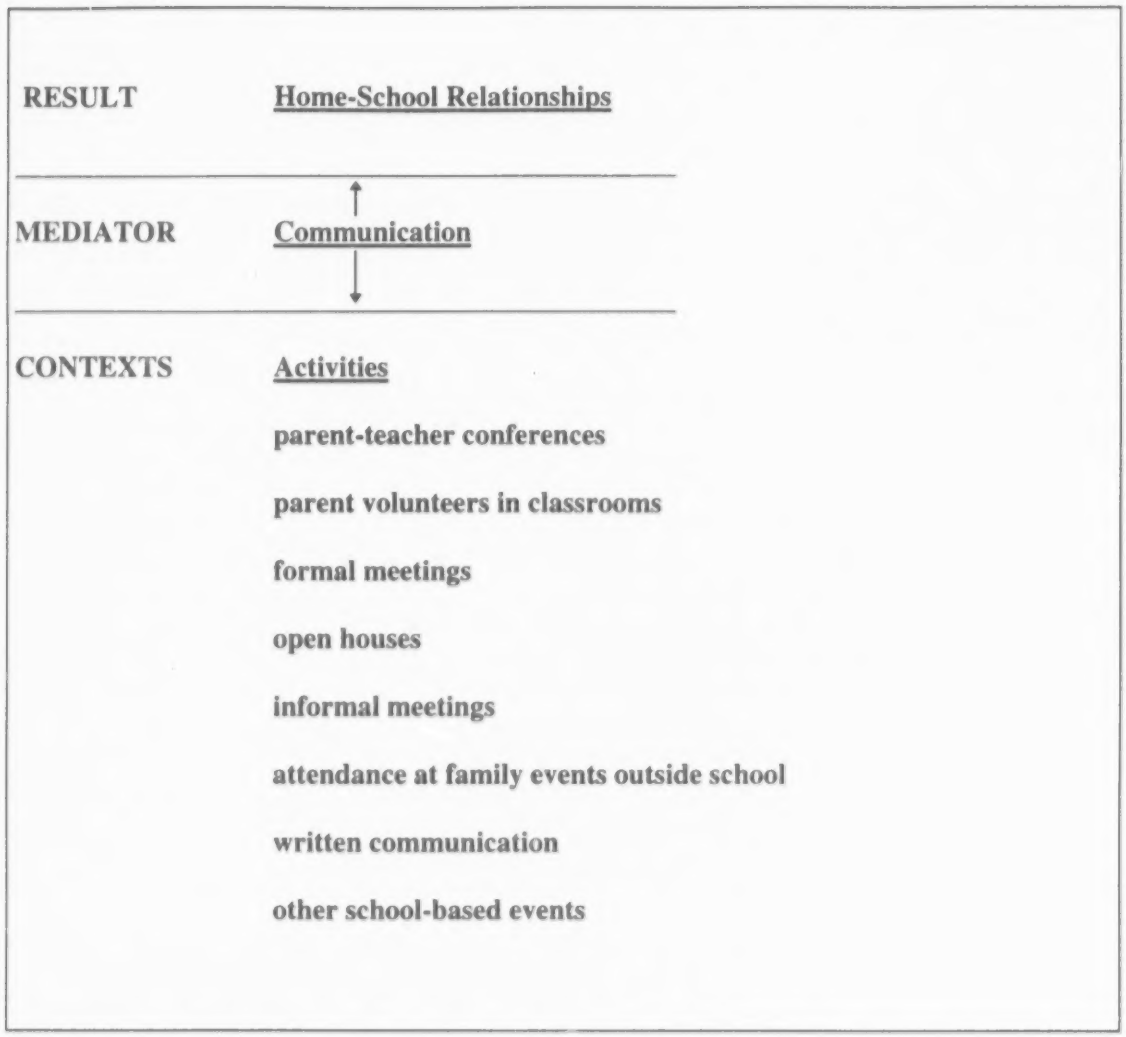

Figure 1: Communication as a mediator in home-school relationships

The Jobs Scenario

A scenario is a brief vignette provided by a teacher or parent that illustrates how differing values associated with a collectivistic or individualistic orientation lead to different interpretations of the same event or different behaviors in the same circumstances.

It is the end of the school day, and the class is cleaning up. Salvador isn't feeling well, and he asks Emanuel to help him with his job for the day, which is cleaning the blackboard. Emanuel isn't sure that he will have time to do both jobs. What do you think the teacher should do?

Example of an individualistic response:

The teacher should find a third person to do Salvador's job. Emanuel has his own job to do and should not be bothered with another job.

Example of a collectivistic response:

The teacher should tell Emanuel to help Salvador with his job.

Figure 2: Example of a scenario

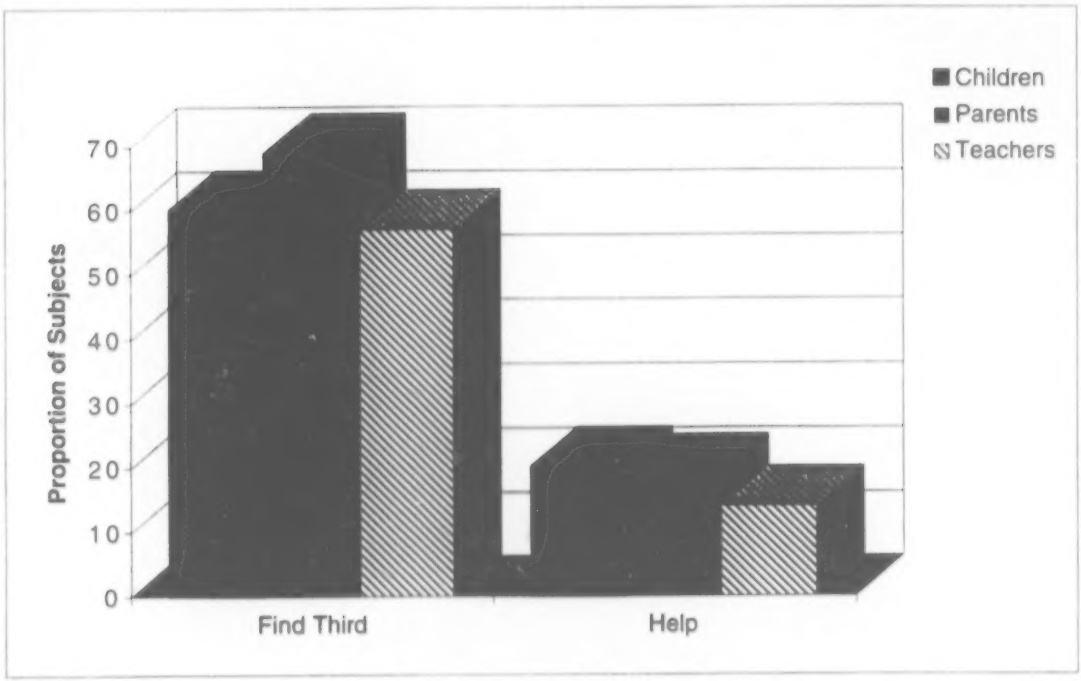

Figure 3: Dominant responses to "Jobs" scenario, School 1 (Euro-American)

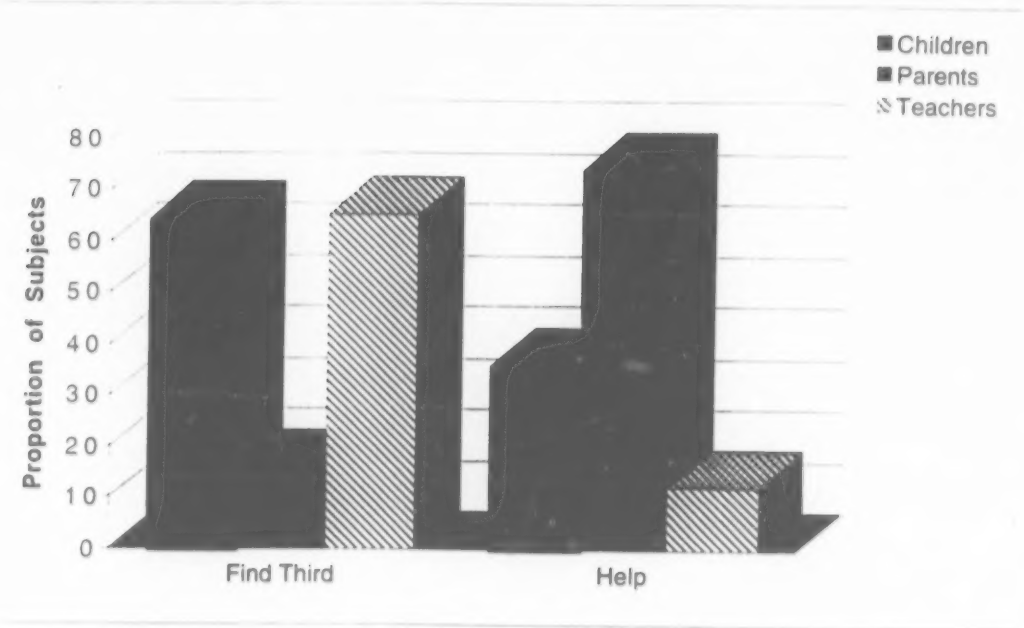

Figure 4: Dominant responses to "Jobs" scenario, School 2 (Latino)

Table 1

Salient features of Individualism and Collectivism

Features of Individualism (Representative of mainstream culture)	**Features of Collectivism (Representative of many immigrant cultures)**
1. Emphasizing an understanding of the physical world through direct exposure to objects - often out of context	**1. Emphasizing an understanding of the physical world as it enhances human relationships**
2. Fostering independence and individual achievement	**2. Fostering interdependence and group success**
3. Promoting self-expression, individual thinking, personal choice	**3. Promoting adherence to norms, respect for authority/elders, group consensus**
4. Associated with private property	**4. Associated with shared property**
5. Associated with egalitarian relationships and flexibility in roles (e.g., upward mobility)	**5. Associated with fixed roles (dependent on gender, family background, age)**

Table 2

Sources of Home-School Conflict

Idividualism	Collectivism
1. Child as individual	1. Child as part of the group
2. Independence	2. Helpfulness
3. Praise (for positive self-esteem)	3. Criticize (for normative behavior)
4. Cognitive skills	4. Social Skills
5. Oral expression	5. Listening to authority
6. Parents' role is to teach	6. Teacher's role is to educate
7. Personal property	7. Sharing

Note: This table is based on Quiroz & Greenfield, in press

Table 3

Changes in Teachers' Orientation to Problem Solving Based on Individualism and Collectivism

Value Orientation	Pre-Assessment	Post-Assessment
Individualistic (I)	**12**	**3**
Collectivistic (C)	**1**	**8**
Both I and C	**0**	**3**
Neither I nor C	**1**	**0**

From Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, Quiroz, & Greenfield, 1997

Table 4

Discourse Samples from Actual Conferences

(from Greenfield, Quiroz, & Raeff, in press)

Note: Examples A, B, and C are from one conference. Examples D and E are from another.

A. Parent ratification of a topic introduced by teacher

1. Teacher: Also I hope that she has, has time to read orally

2. Mother: (Nodding and smiling) Ahhuh.

3. Teacher: and also silent every night

4: Mother: Ahhuh.

B. Parent elaboration of a topic introduced by teacher

(continuation of conversation above)

5. Teacher: with you orally and with her silent in the bed for a book which she has an interest

6. Mother: Ahhuh. She took out from the library. How many? Seven?

C. Parents' confirmation of teacher's comment

1. Teacher: (pointing to report card): Takes pride in her work. Most of the time her work is neat, but I'd like her to work a li: :ttle bit harder on trying to make sure that just -- not perfect, but --

2. Father: Yeah

3. Teacher: As neat as possible

4. Mother: Yeah, a little bit

5. Teacher: Yeah, a little neater

6. Mother: A little bit neater.

7. Teacher: Yeah, work on your handwriting a little bit.

8. Mother: Yeah, she could improve it.

D. Lack of parent ratification of a topic introduced by teacher

1. Teacher: She's doing great. She's doing beautifully in English and in reading. And in writing, and in speaking.

2. Father: Looks down at lap.

E. Changing of teacher's topic by parent

(continuation of conversation above)

3. Teacher: It's wonderful.

4. Father: (turning to point to younger son)

The same, this guy, h[e]

5. Teacher: (interrupting, with shrill tone) [G]o: :d!

6. Father: [He can] write =

7. Teacher: (cutting him off) He can write in English?

8. Father: = well, his name.

Key to linguistic notations:

: : symbolizes lengthening of a syllable

[...] when brackets are lined up vertically

[...] the material in both sets of brackets was said simultaneously

= signs link part of an utterance that was interrupted by another speaker